T/SOR/49/1/93

SCOTTISH LABOUR HISTORY REVIEW

PUBLISHED BY THE SCOTTISH LABOUR HISTORY SOCIETY No.10 75p WINTER 1996/SPRING 1997

10th ANNIVERSARY ALL STAR CAST:

★★★

ALEX CLARK

★★★

HELEN BIGGAR

★★★

LEWIS GRASSIC GIBBON

★★★

JOHN BAIRD

★★★

THOMAS HARDY

★★★

WILLIAM MORRIS

★★★

BILL ALEXANDER

★★★

LES FORSTER

Contents

The Scottish Labour History Society 2
Editorial 3
Helen Manson Biggar (1909-1953): Film maker and Sculptor 4
Squat! 7
Book Review: Rocking the Boat by Les Forster 7
Thomas Hardy 1752-1832 and The London Corresponding Society 8
Personal Experiences from a Lifetime in the Communist and Labour Movements 9
Grassic Gibbon's Glasgow 12
1820 Society Report (1996) 14
John Baird's Military Career 15
News from the National Museum of Labour History 16
Communist History Network 18
The Musuem of Liverpool Life 19
The William Morris Society 20
STUC Centenary News 21
Media Section 22
Memorials of the Spanish Civil War 23

ISSN No: 0952-9624

You are invited to join...

The Scottish Labour History Society

THE AIM of the Society is to promote the study, discussion and publication of Labour history - that is, the history of Scottish, British and international labour and working-class movements. Since our formation in 1961, we have done this through:

- conferences
- publications
- exhibitions
- projects

Conferences

We hold at least two conferences each year - in Glasgow in March, and in Edinburgh in October. These day-events are open to Society members, delegates of affiliated organisations and the general public. Recent conferences have included speakers from the academic and trade union world on:

- Scotland and the Russian Revolution
- Chartism to Independent Labour 1838-88
- Radical Scotland 1787-1837
- The Spanish Civil War 1936-39
- Unemployed Struggles: Past and Present
- Changing Life and Labour in Scotland 1760-1820
- White Collar Unionism
- Film, TV and Labour

Publications

Our *Journal* and *Review*, with their mixture of academic and popular articles, are published annually and sent free to members. Books on labour history edited for the Society by Secretary Ian MacDougall include:

- A Catalogue of Some Labour Records in Scotland (1978)

Exhibitions

We have helped organise temporary exhibitions in the past on subjects such as:

- Trade Union Banners
- 1926 General Strike
- 'Tremble Ye Tyrants!': 200 years of Organised Labour in Scotland (1986)

Projects

We have initiated a number of special projects over the years to preserve and promote labour history:

- Archive records - preserving documents and relics of the working-class movement
- Oral history - recording the memories of veteran activists
- Audio-visual history - promoting the making of film and TV programmes
- Memorials - commemorating labour history personalities
- Slides - collecting coloured slides of trade union banners

MEMBERSHIP

We are an independent organisation, but have always enjoyed strong practical, moral and financial support from the broad trade union, labour and co-operative movement. We hope to strengthen these links, and we welcome new members and affiliates who can help us to:

- form and run regional labour history groups and workshops
- expand our range of contacts with sympathetic organisations (museums, societies, labour movement bodies etc)
- promote labour history in the educational field
- expand the publishing, film and video, oral history activities of the Society
- run a Society stall at labour movement events

Join us by sending annual subscription of £5 (O.A.P., student, unemployed £2) to:

Irene Sweeney,
Department of Scottish History
University of Glasgow
9 University Gardens,
Glasgow G12

(Members are urged to pay by Banker's Order and to inform the Treasurer of any change of address)

Editorial

This 10th annual edition of the *Review* continues its initial aim of publishing articles on some of the lesser-known by-ways of labour and social history. For most of the authors, the research and writing is a labour of love. The hope is that reading such material will stimulate more people to delve into the past to follow up their interests and enthusiasms without feeling the need to devote themselves entirely to full-time foot-noted academic research.

Anna Shepherd has pieced together the remarkable life of her aunt Helen Biggar, with privileged access to family documents and letters giving an unrivalled insight to the passions and politics of the 30s and 40s. The Society was pleased recently to find that its nomination of Helen Biggar for inclusion in the new *Dictionary of National Biography* had been accepted. The (all too brief) article has now been submitted, but since publication of the *DNB* may not be till 2004 (!), we are pleased that Anna can give us a more detailed two-part account of Helen's life in the meantime.

Derek Annis's researches into the graves of the pioneers of the labour movement are well known to *Review* readers; as is the work of Peter Berresford Ellis on the 1820 martyrs, and we are pleased to have further contributions from both of them.

John Manson's upbringing in Caithness has given him insights into and affinities for Lewis Grassic Gibbon, and his researches take us into a lesser-known aspect of LGG's time away from the Mearns – the Glasgow industrial socialist connection.

Another lad o' pairts, Alex Clark, takes the first of a two-part look into his own past to review a lifetime of labour movement struggle – perhaps as a prelude to an autobiography? Alex has also recently been taped by Ian MacDougall of the Society, to add to the growing archive of oral labour history sources collected over the past decades.

We are privileged to have an article from Bill Alexander, who has taken time off from a busy year's schedule of International Brigade commemorations up and down the country, to look at the significance for today of the events that happened 60 years ago in Spain.

The Society thanks these and all previous authors of articles and reports which have given the *Review* its existence over the past 10 years and have allowed information and ideas about our labour history and legacy to spread just a little bit further, in the most adverse of political and social conditions.

Obituaries

Over the past year, the labour movement has lost the services of a greater-than-usual number of figures from its heroic era.

Rose Kerrigan, died 10th July 1995, aged 92; widow of Communist stalwart Peter Kerrigan, who made her own mark throughout her life as trade unionist, campaigner on unemployment, women's rights, birth control, the Spanish Civil War and CND; born in Dublin as Rose Klasko to a Lithuanian Jewish immigrant family, she grew up in Glasgow, as part of its socialist movement from her early years, becoming a founder member of the CPGB in 1921; a film about Rose by National Film & TV School student Jackie Waldock should soon be ready for distribution.

Harry Baines, died 8th October 1995, aged 85; Communist artist from the Manchester School of socially committed artists of the inter-war years; worked with Joan Littlewood, public murals and a number of left-wing causes.

Allan Merson, died 28th October 1995, aged 79; key member of the Communist Party Historians' Group; from Northumberland, joined the CP at Oxford at the time of The Spanish Civil war; 30 years as a lecturer at Southampton University..

Mikki Doyle, died 8th December 1995, aged 79; former women's editor of the *Morning Star* and widow of Scottish-American Communist Charlie Doyle, with whom she was deported to Britain in 1953 at the height of McCarthyism; born Miriam Levental in the Manhatten Jewish immigrant community, she lost an eye when attacked by a racist at a Paul Robeson concert in 1949.

Phil Piratin, died 10th December 1995, aged 88; Communist Party MP for Mile End 1945-50 after a classic East End working-class career campaigning on housing and against fascism; autobiography *Our Flag Stays Red* first publisbed 1951.

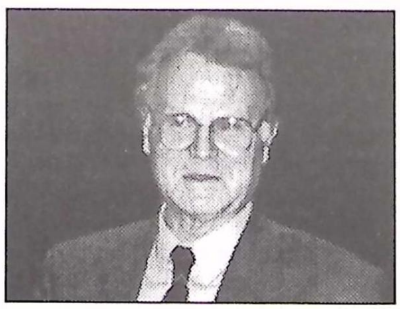
Charles Madge, died 17th January 1996, aged 83; poet and sociologist best remembered as co-founder with Tom Harrison of *Mass Observation* in 1937, to which he contributed his 'anthropological' study of working-class life in Bolton in the late 30s.

Hugh Savage, died 3rd April 1996, aged 77; lifelong socialist and trade unionist, good friend of the SLHS and the People's Palace in the days of Elspeth King; born in Bridgeton, plumber to trade, active as shop steward and strike leader from Clyde Apprentices war-time days and campaigner on housing; one-time CP member wbo became latterday dissident with group centred round Harry McShane; co-author witb Les Forster of book on Willie Nairn.

Nan Milton, died 23rd April 1996, on the day before her 83rd birthday, and a month after the death of her busband Ellice Milton; daughter of John Maclean who helped preserve and revive the memory of her father with a series of publications and the activities of the John Maclean Society; at various times associated with the Communist Party, Labour Party, Scottish Republican Socialist Society and SNP.

Albert Meltzer, died 7th May 1996, aged 76; lifelong trade unionist and prominent figure in the anarchist movement, from youthful anti-fascist and pro-Spanish anarchist campaigns; editor of *Black Flag* anarchist journal.

Conference Photos – 'Communism and the Labour Movement' Glasgow, March 1996



Above (left to right): speaker Carol Thornton, chair Andy Clark and speakers Kevin Morgan & Willie Thompson. ● Right: Ian MacDougall retires after 35 years as Society Secretary and founding leading light.

Illustration Acknowledgements

Front & Back Cover – Posters from Society for Cultural Relations with USSR and Marx Memorial Library, distributed as postcards by Leeds Postcards.
p.4-6 – The Billie Love Historical Collection, 3 Winton Street, Ryde, Isle of Wight, PO33 2BX.
p.8 – Derek Annis
p.9-11 – Alex Clark's personal collection **p.14-15** – John Murphy, 1820 Society
All other photos by Douglas Allen

Contributors

Bill Alexander is Hon. Sec. of the International Brigade Association.
Douglas Allen lectures in history and media studies at Motherwell College, and is committee member of SLHS.
Derek Annis is a UNISON trade unionist who is researching into the graves and monuments of labour's past.
Ian Bayne is Chairperson of the 1820 Society.
Alex Clark is a lifelong communist, trade unionist and cultural activist, latterly as Scottish Officer for Equity and STUC's first Arts Officer.
Peter Berresford Ellis is Hon. Pres. of the 1820 Society and co-author of *The Scottish Insurrection of 1820.*
Loraine Knowles is Curator at the Museum of Liverpool Life (National Museums & Galleries on Merseyside) and member of the North West Labour History Society.
John Manson is a retired school-teacher, now living in Castle Douglas.
Anna Shepherd is a former media researcher who has extensively collected material and written on the activities of her aunt Helen Biggar and her Glasgow and London artistic and cultural milieu.

Helen Manson Biggar (1909-1953): Film maker and Sculptor

Those who have heard of Helen Biggar will probably have heard of her in connection with Norman McLaren, the innovative film maker, with whom she worked in close collaboration on the short films *Camera Makes Whoopee* (1935) and *Hell UnLtd* (1936), the most important political film of the 1930's. She also directed and produced the documentary *Challenge to Fascism* - a record of the May Day Rally in Glasgow in 1938. Her diminutive figure, bursting with energy and political commitment was well known in artistic circles in Glasgow.

Shortly after finishing *Challenge to Fascism,* Helen attended a conference of the Theatre Guild between 28th and 29th May, 1938, organised by the Glasgow Workers' Theatre Group. The conference was patronized by Victor Gollancz and Hugh MacDiarmid. One of the speakers was John Allen of London Unity Theatre. His thesis was that plays, in general, should give expression to the Socialist viewpoint. He maintained that the more theatrical the production was, the more real it became to the audience. Allen felt that there was a starkness in Glasgow akin to that of America and that it was fertile ground for a theatrical renaissance. The aim was to express what the working class thought and did and how they lived. They should begin with bedrock simplicity, develop quickly and sustain interest. Helen was very impressed by the mood of the conference and in June, on behalf of the Glasgow Kino Film Group wrote to the Workers' Theatre Group asking them to perform poems at the first showing of *Challenge to Fascism*. By the 19th June, Helen joined the Glasgow Workers' Theatre Group and was nominated to take part in a production organising a "Living Newspaper". Other members were Vincent Flynn and Robert McAulay Mitchell and the artist Tom MacDonald.

It was a very turbulent time. The Spanish Civil War was in its death throes and the Munich Crisis had just blown up over Germany's demands on Czechoslovakia. In Britain everyone felt that war was imminent. A great blow was the winding up of the International Brigade in October. Soon events from Spain were superceded by news from Germany, particularly relating to the fate of the Jews. A new exodus began and distinguished Jews from all walks of life fled from Germany and some even found their way to Glasgow. In December Helen worked with Robert Mitchell on a production of the American play *Plant in the Sun*.

Soon Helen was appointed a producer and Tom MacDonald as stage manager. They worked on *Tired Ostrich* and *On Guard for Spain*. Sadly in March the Spanish Government was overthrown and Franco held a military parade in Madrid in May 1939. Although the war was over there was still an enormous amount of work to do connected with the Spanish Aid Commitee to relieve the sufferings of thousands of Spanish refugees. On 26th August they produced a Spanish Pageant. Helen worked out the cost to be £75 for a pageant of 500 performers. It was held at Scotstoun Showground and everything went well. Mitchell accepted the responsibility but Helen did the donkey work. They made a good team and did a lot of good work together.

Helen Biggar c.1911

When war broke out in September, 1939, Helen was thirty years old. Two days after the declaration of war the Workers Theatre Group agreed that their next presentation should be Jack Lindsay's *We Need Russia*; they also produced another Living Newspaper. On the personal front Helen was extremely saddened by the departure for America of her erstwhile colleague Norman McLaren. She wrote to his partner Guy Glover "I am glad Norman and you are going together to the U.S.A. and I hope that you will both be able to work together. I wish I was there too... you know... When you think of it it is a strange place this world. How is it that people are given a glimpse of one another and then whisked away to the other end of the world? But as I said to Norman it is fine to know that no matter where we are it is really the same fight that we will wage and that we are part of the forward movement in the whole world."

In March the Workers Theatre Group decided to perform *U.A.B.*, *Black Pit* and *Rehearsal*. Helen was at this time Minutes Secretary and Stage Manager. It was a very difficult time; many shows had to be cancelled at short notice due to air raids. They were all anxious to raise the standard of production and to stage legitimate plays by good authors. Political revues were out, because anything politically controversial would be banned by the police.

It was a golden August in Glasgow, that summer of 1940. The city was full of interesting strangers, refugees from many parts of the world, Jews for the most part, from Poland, Austria and Germany. She met the Polish artists Jankel Adler and Josef Herman. She found a studio for Josef to work in, high up above Glasgow. Her new friends helped her to assuage her sorrow at losing Norman McLaren, a little. She liked to think of the wonderful time she and Norman had together, "working very hard in Stirling and having nice quiet 'breaks' in the sun in your garden... and at night when we were very tired talking and talking in your sitting room when everyone else had gone to bed... I will always be glad - very glad that I met you at that time in my life... you were good for me. You see, Norman, there are very few people whom I have met that I really believed in... and I like to think that all those who know a little of the important things in life should be 'together' - Unity is strength - I think the "togetherness" is important no matter where one is. It is really fine to know that what we are working for is the same that is being fought for all ever the world, and that we are part of the FORWARD movement."

Artistically, the year 1940 was extremely important for Glasgow. In spite of the war and the bombing people became much more conscious of art. It was as if they felt they must do all the things that they had only *talked* about doing in the past, *now* before it was too late. A manifestation of this trend was the formation in the Winter of 1940 of Glasgow Unity Theatre. It was the amalgamation of four Glasgow amateur dramatic clubs which had been on the point of disbanding owing to war difficulties. In terms of money its capital was nil - in terms of enthusiastic personnel its capital was immeasurable. David Archer had opened an Art Centre in Scott Street - a gallery, bookshops and coffee room - and it was at this centre that discussions between Robert Mitchell, Oscar Lewenstein, James Barke and Helen Biggar eventually led to the formation of Glasgow Unity. The Workers Theatre Group, Jewish Players, Transport Players, Clarion Players and other agit-prop

groups had all got together and with some direction from Herbert Marshall and John Allen from London Unity had combined to form one company. Their first production emerged from a dingy basement in Clarendon Street in the spring of 1941 and was, appropriately enough *Awake and Sing* by Clifford Odets. This play portrayed the various frustrations and tragedies of the Bergers, a lower-class Jewish family in the Bronx. The final outcome is the resolution of one idealistic son to devote his life to the betterment of humanity. This theme must have found an immediate appeal in Glagow at that time, flooded with European Jewry from many countries.

In April 1941 Glasow Unity staged *Distant Point* by Alexandre Nikolaevitch Afinogenov (1904-1941) a Russian dramatist. Helen and producer Donald McBean, spent long hours at her home in Mount Stuart Street, working out the moves. One evening there was a nine-hour raid and Donald stayed on working until the "all clear" sounded. Helen designed the sets for this production, which was presented at the Atheneum.

Meanwhile in New York, Norman McLaren and Guy were having a very hard time of it, finding it extremely difficult to get into the film industry. Helen wrote: "It is so miserable that all of us have to be so far apart when we would like to be working together and really producing things that would be of use to the world... I always think how marvellous it would be if we could work together again... surely that time will come again. For myself I can assure you I would really like that... and that I will know a whole lot more, and that when I do get a chance to really produce something I hope I will feel I have made use of this time, I have had to go through for so long now... (How badly I have said that, I hope you understand what I mean.)... Norman, I do want us always to keep in touch with one another. Please write to me just as often as you can, and I will also write to you. I do consider that your friendship with me is important - it is to me - and that I value it as much as I value anything."

Still from 'Challenge to Fascism': Peter Kerrigan and Willie Gallagher

In Glasgow in 1941 Helen was flourishing. A landmark of this time was a production of *Major Operation* specially adapted for Unity by James Barke from his novel. This was the first play to depict the Clyde shipyard worker and had a power and native humour which greatly appealed to its audiences, composed largely of shipyard workers themselves. Helen often had disagreements with Barke on the subject of presentation. Barke was a convinced "naturalist" and somewhat limited in his vision. As far as Scotland was concerned, most contemporaries thought that no one had the ideas and style that Helen had. When Jankel Adler moved out of his studio Helen took it over and soon it became the centre of a thriving artistic community in Sandyford Place. Helen was, as Josef Herman put it, "everybody's mother", rather like Wendy in *Peter Pan*. In 1942 David Archer who owned the flat was required to move to 23 Windsor Terrace. Helen, Benjamin Creme, poet Sidney Graham, and artist Robert Frame all moved with David to his new flat. It was there that David Archer published Sidney Graham's book *Cage Without Grievance* in August 1942. When David Archer closed the Art Centre in Scott Street, the premises were acquired by Unity, as the situation was perfect. Unity was gradually beginning to make its mark upon the Glasgow scene. Helen became involved with the production of *Song of Tomorrow* by John Kincaid in November 1943.

James Barke followed his *Major Operation* with *The Night of the Big Blitz* which was produced in May 1944. It dealt with two Glasgow families, one middle class the other working class, drawn together by the war. Helen did the decor for this production. She was required to design for such scenes as "A timeless world of the subconscious" and "Return to the Present over the Bridge of Symbolism". This obviously gave free rein to her imaginative abstract sets - mostly with free standing shapes. As time went on Unity required more space so they took over the premises of the Austrian Refugee Centre which continued to produce excellently cooked and cheap meals with Austrian and German menus. It gradually became a meeting place for people interested in the arts. Soon everyone was drawn into the excitement of the pageant to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Co-Operative Society. This was perhaps Helen's biggest challenge. She had been commissioned to design and make costumes for five hundred performers - it was to be no haphazard affair - for the staging at St. Andrew's Halls, Glasgow, from 3rd to 8th July 1944. Helen persuaded director Robert Mitchell to allow Robert Frame to do the choreography. Helen's faith was justified - the ballets in the Pageant were successful. Mitchell spent hours with Helen discussing various production points and seemed to rely on her judgment implicitly.

The months prior to the performance in the St. Andrews Halls were very exciting and

Still from 'Challenge to Fascism'

the work very satisfying. The pageant was fairly straightforward with an historical theme, written by L. du Garde Peach, but it had an exceptionally demanding lighting plot. Not only was Helen in charge of all the costumes but she also designed the set. She had to adapt the conventional concert hall, with a massive pipe organ, into something resembling a set with artistic unity – it turned out to be very effective. She designed an enormous cyclorama covering up the organ pipes and the conventional architectural features. On this she projected different changes of scene or mood. During the French Revolution episode, huge flickering flames were projected, out of which the monstrous shadow of Napoleon gradually appeared. The ballet which was called "Ballet of the Machines" was symbolic of the coming of the Industrial Revolution and the plight of the child workers. The costumes for the ballet were designed in black and white, with black and white parti-coloured tights and short black tunics, the make-up was all dead white. Most of the costumes for the crowd players were painted hessian or dyed tailoring canvas. The sewing was done by members of the Co-Operative Women's Guilds supervised by Helen. The *Herald* of 1/7/1944 proclaimed the Pageant as "a triumph of co-operation... Miss Helen Biggar has supervised the task of dressing and redecorating the Glasgow show which runs to eight lavishly produced episodes retailing the history of Co-operation from the days of the Fenwick weavers to the present time, when in Scotland alone the movement numbers 214,000 people." A second Pageant was performed at Dumbarton.

Meanwhile in America Norman and Guy were having a very hard time. Eventually John Grierson came to their rescue by inviting Norman to go to Canada and work with him at the National Film Board in Ottawa, Ontario, where Norman was given a free hand to continue his own idiosyncratic cartoon films. Some of the first were *Alouette* and *La-hau sur ces montagnes*. At last Norman had found a niche where his creativity was given full rein. He did not, however, give up his ideals as those who have seen *Neighbours* (1952) and *Chairy Tale* (1957) will realise.

In Scotland, Unity's performances were maintaining a fair standard. More and more plays began to come in, plays with a strong relationship to life. James Barke returned to the theatre with *When the Boys Come Home*, another shipyard play, (he himself worked in the costing office of a shipyard) and *Her Name was Barbara Allen*. Ena Lamont Stewart who was employed in a voluntary hospital, presented the problems of nurses in *Starched Aprons*. One day Mitchell showed Helen and Robert Frame some photographs from the Moscow Arts Theatre production of Gorky's *The Lower Depths*. He now considered that he had a team of players sufficiently strong to perform this play in Scotland. He believed that Glasgow Unity was particularly strong in team work. In *The Lower Depths* was a variety of interesting parts, all highly characterised, yet none outweighing any of the others. It was at about this time that Robert introduced Helen to a young Jewish fellow artist called Eli Montlake, he was 20 years of age and soon was part of Helen's small circle of friends.

The production of *The Lower Depths* was remarkable from many points of view. Mitchell even went to the extent of having G.A. Birkett, lecturer in Russian at the University of Glasgow, retranslate it into modern Scottish idiom. Mitchell, Helen and Eveline Garratt worked closely together on the script. The setting and costumes which Helen did for the Gorky play were among the best that she ever produced, and she made some very beautiful drawings for the costumes, which were later exhibited at London Unity. It was decided that the theme of the play was "the struggle for a better life"

Helen Biggar c.1944

and the idea underlying the play was "the better life is only possible when man individually and collectively realises his own inherent power." The play was performed in Glasgow in April 1945. The *Manchester Guardian* said: "This Glasgow Unity production is much more Russian than the Russian". It won critical acclaim and an amateur theatre award.

This play was closely followed in May with *Remembered For Ever* by Bernard McGinn. It was a play about Ireland and was also designed by Helen. The play had a very good cast, including Stanley Baxter (aged 17 years old), Russell Hunter, Roddie McMillan and Archie Duncan. It was produced by Eveline Garratt, Helen was stage Director and the music was arranged by Robert Frame and Eli Montlake.

In May Helen exhibited a work in reinforced concrete entitled "The Kneeling Girl" at the 3rd Exhibition of the New Scottish Group held at the McLure Gallery. It was in the midst of all these activities, that the world scene altered. Germany finally surrendered. War in Europe was ended.

Helen made a trip to London. She wrote to Norman McLaren "The last day I was there I met a boy who said you were now back in Britain making films. But as it was my last day there I could not make sure – so when I got back to Glasgow I wrote to ask your mother. She said – as I feel – "I wish that were true" – However, I now have contact with you again, my dear Norman and I hope you will write to me. So Guy and you are in Ottawa together still – that is fine. I am sculpting very hard just now – in, for me, a new material – reinforced concrete, it is terribly exciting to work in. I am enclosing 3 photos of a "Mother and child" for you... Now Norman I am so glad that you are making films in a big way again, with a proper staff and unit – are you still enjoying it? And my dear are you able to do what you want to do in your work? I am slowly creating my real sculpture and I do hope to be able to have an Exhibition in London in the not too far future – but it is all so dependent on all sorts of things like money and transport etc etc. We shall see! Please Norman let this be just a start of our letters again. Give my love to Guy – and a whole lot to you."

In another air letter Helen wrote; "I did want you to know soon how glad I am to have connection with you again... I have such a lot to tell you, and I am so glad to know you are able to work at films in a real way. You sound very happy and I am glad Guy is able to work with you too. I only wish you were not so far away, as it would be so nice to talk to you again. I feel quite good about my work just now as I have been able to do some work as I would wish. I am, I hope, going to London again – this time to try to work – Glasgow is hopeless – I know it will be more difficult from all sorts of points of view – but I think it will be worth it? Hope so anyway."

Appropriately enough Glasgow Unity's next production was Odet's *Awake and Sing*. Helen was stage director and Tom Macdonald did the decor. It had been the first production staged by Glasgow Unity, and it was thought very appropriate to celebrate victory in Europe with a revival. Mitchell resolved to enter an excerpt from his *The Lower Depths* production for the SCDA Festival. Both the sets and costumes which Helen designed for this play were commented on by John Fernald, the adjudicator, who placed Unity first... He praised the ingenuity with which the sets had been adapted – the staircase and bunks were used against a background of curtains. London Unity agreed that *The Lower Depths* should be put on for two weeks during the summer season, which coincided with the Glasgow Fair of that year, the whole cast giving up their holidays to make the adventure possible. This meant that they would be taken to London with all expenses paid, an important factor both for Helen and Robert Frame. The prospect of going to London with the company was exciting and the post war world was full of infinite possibilities.

● To be continued

Anna Shepherd

Squat!

This year sees the 50th anniversary of what was arguably the highpoint of a movement which stretched over a number of years, but which made its greatest impact on public consciousness in the autumn of 1946 – the squatting movement. Most accounts have naturally concentrated on the national angle, often seen as an example of the problems facing the post-war Labour government. A look at squatting from the Scottish perspective adds some interesting new evidence to the debate.

Nationally, the squatting campaign is generally seen as a byproduct of the housing crisis, caused by war-time damage and the frustrations of returning ex-servicemen. Brighton was the perhaps unlikely location of the first wave of takeovers of empty properties by 'Vigilantes' through the summer of 1945. A second wave of occupations came in the Spring of 1946, this time empty army camps being occupied nationwide by at least 40,000 people. A third phase hit the headlines in the Autumn of 1946 with the occupation of the Duchess of Bedford building in Kensington. This challenge to private property in the heart of London, under the apparent guidance of the Communist Party, proved too much for an establishment that up until then had tolerated the plight of the homeless, and the full weight of the law was brought against the leaders. Thereafter the immediate crisis quietened down, as Labour struggled to provide prefabs and new council housing for the people.

To a great extent, events in Scotland mirrored those nationally. Initially occupation of houses in Blantyre and Edinburgh in Spring and Summer of 1945 were followed by the occupation of camps throughout Scotland through the Summer and Autumn of 1946. A wave of occupations of empty mansions and condemned tenements throughout Glasgow culminated in the 'cause celebre' occupation of the Grand Hotel, Charing Cross, in September leading to similar police evictions and denunciations of the role of the Communist Party in leading these squats. As always, the Scottish authorities turned to their key weapon, the Trespass (Scotland) Act of 1865 which stated that "any person who lodges in any premises or occupies or encamps on any land, being private property, without the consent of the owner or occupier...is guilty of an offence..."

The crisis did not die down in Scotland, with continued periodic occupations of houses, and especially army camps, throughout Scotland through the late 40s and early 50s. By the winter of 1953/4 leadership of the movement had passed to the growing force of Tenants Association, with the Glasgow Area Council of Tenants Associations taking on the Property Owners and Factors over property left empty. Most notoriously, the dispute over a Western Heritable Trust block of flats in Hillington in December 1953 led to a month-long 'siege' ending in violent evictions and court prosecutions.

Even more interesting examples of continuity appear when instances of squatting are traced backwards from the post-war years. Beyond another Glasgow 'cause celebre', the Shaftsbury Lane mass squat in Sandyford through 1937/8, the centre of squatting activity appears to have been Lanarkshire. From 1930 to 1938, hardly a year passed without some part of the Hamilton/Blantyre/Burnbank area erupting in what became known as the "scandal of the Hamilton squatters". Under the leadership of the Communist Party and the National Unemployed Workers Movement, sometimes it was condemned miners' houses that were re-occupied, other times new slum clearance housing schemes that were taken over. Events culminated in the 'colony' set up by the Burnbank Squatters Associaion organising a march to Edinburgh in 1937 to lobby the Department of Health over the lack of housing. Even further back in time, in Motherwell there were prosecutions, in 1926 for "squatting in a disused house", and in 1907 and 1908 for "lodging in an unoccupied house" and "trespass in a colliery boiler house".

This proliferation of squatting, beyond the most famous postwar period of obvious crisis, suggests it was more than just a passing phase, exploited by communists for political gain as the accusation often went. Rather it looks like squatting was an integral part of working-class social and community struggle, especially in the industrial and mining areas in the west of Scotland, ranking along with the celebrated rent struggles as a weapon of resistance to capitalist private property rights and inequalities. It provided grassroots opportunites for revolutionary leadership to combine with popular struggle for a potent form of self-help direct action.

Douglas Allen

Book Review

Les Forster, *Rocking the Boat : Memoirs of a Glasgow Socialist and Whistleblower*, 69pp., ISBN 1 873586 65 5, £3.95

Clydeside Press are to be congratulated on bringing to print the memoirs of another of Glasgow's maverick socialists and trade unionists. Les Forster is best known as part of the 'rebel team' - Harry McShane, Hugh Savage, Ned Donaldson, Bill McCulloch - who have stood since the 1950s for the principles of socialism - but outwith the Communist Party or any parties further left.

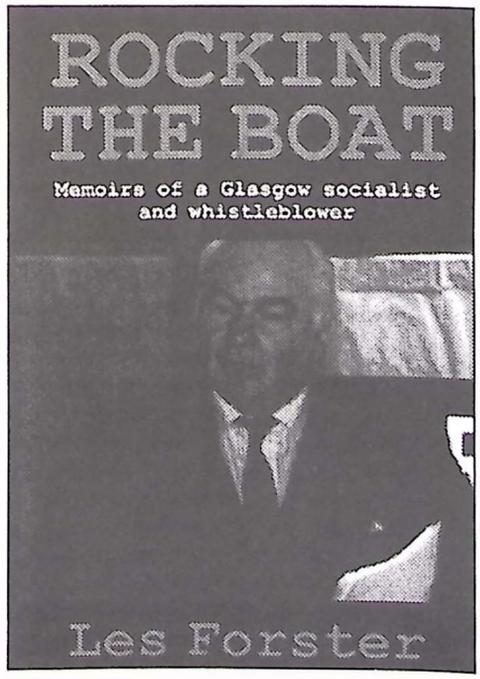
Now aged 77, Les's memoirs make a distinctive contribution to the genre of Glasgow socialist reminiscences. His background is slightly different from our stereotype expectations. His father was a "quite prosperous" master blacksmith and joiner, a Tory church elder and teetotaller who sent Les to the feepaying Allan Glen's school and moved the family out from Maryhill to a country cottage near Milngavie.

Les had no set career ideas, working as an apprentice joiner, various labouring, engineering and building site jobs through the 1940s and early 50s. In the mid-50s he settled in a British Rail job for the last 30 years of his working life.

His main interest was in gaining political knowledge, mopping up information from WEA classes, political meetings and soapbox debates from the late 1930s. After listening to all party creeds, he settled for Communist Party membership in 1940. During his 11 years in the Party, he experienced the Good (Marxist theory), the Bad (Stalinist hero-worship) and the Ugly (the bureaucrats who ran the Party, and whom he soon came to despise for their distant 'hands-off' approach to the working-class struggle). His growing disillusion with this (lack of) leadership over issues like the squatting and Merrylee house sales campaigns led to his departure from the Party and involvement with the Harry McShane-Eric Heffer axis of disillusioned ex-communists, the short-lived Socialist Workers Federation of the mid-50s.

This modest - perhaps *too* modest - booklet gives us a good insight into the socialist and trade union world of 1940s and 1950s Glasgow. But it is all too brief and fleeting an insight, leaving many areas unexplored and questions unanswered. Hopefully it is just a prelude to a more detailed future account by someone who has a unique story to tell from the centre of an important set of events.

Douglas Allen



Thomas Hardy 1752 – 1832 and The London Corresponding Society

Having re-read the article 'Scottish Democracy's First Martyrs' in the 1994-95 issue of the *Review*, I thought that the event should be stated from the English connection.

Thomas Hardy was born on the 3rd March 1752 in Larbert, Stirlingshire, son of Walter Hardy a sailor who died in 1761 homeward bound from America. Due to his mother's change of circumstances, his education for the clerical profession was to change with his mother's father,a shoe-maker, taking over his charge.

When Hardy was of age he was taught his grandfather's trade as a shoemaker and on completing his training was to make his way to London by ship, which was to take eleven days,arriving on the 23rd April 1724.

He was soon to find work as a shoemaker and being of a serious disposition he became acquainted with many of the Dissenters in the area. It was in 1791 that he set up a shoemakers shop at No.9 Piccadilly and it was at this time that Hardy began to take an active interest in the politics of the day. He, like so many others, felt the burden of heavy taxes and the rise in the price of goods. It appeared to him that corruption by men who called themselves representatives of the people in parliament was rife and that they were selected by a small number of influential people of vested interest at the expense of the working people.

It was because of this that Hardy had the idea of forming a society as a means of informing the people of the injustices that were being committed to their rights and to unite them in fighting for change to the established system of corruption and oppression.

It was from these thoughts that Hardy and nine other people, all acquainted, were to meet in January 1792 to talk of Parliamentary Reform. At the meeting Hardy produced a set of rules to form a society which he was to call The London Corresponding Society, with himself being nominated both its Secretary and Treasurer. The society was called the Corresponding Society because it was illegal to form a national organisation.

The first correspondence was in March 1792 to the Rev. Bryant of the Sheffield Society stating its views and intentions. This was followed in April by a public address to the National Convention in France which was received with wild applause, being the first address from England and signed by Maurice Margarot as President and Thomas Hardy as Secretary. This was one of the documents brought against Hardy for High Treason.

These Letters were to bring The London Corresponding Society into a central position within the political field. By the end of 1792 the LCS had formed correspondence with societies in all parts of England and Scotland. In the November a hostile society was formed, the Association for Protecting Property Against Republicans and Levellers, set up by the government to terrorise and frighten LCS members and societies around the country. In answer to this the LCS published an address to the nation to vindicate their characters and beliefs. Again the address was signed by both the Chairman and Secretary.

Copies were printed on bill boards around London. Soon the bill stickers were arrested, tried, found guilty and were sentenced to six months imprisonment, with a fine which was payed by The London Corresponding Society.

In November 1793 a Convention for the Scottish Societies was held in Edinburgh. Its secretary William Shirving wrote to Hardy requesting that he send delegates to the convention along with other English Societies. The business of the Convention was open to the public to attend. The eyes of the nation were fixed on the proceedings and the government became alarmed. This provoked the magistrates of Edinburgh to invade the convention with constables to disperse it. What followed is well known to readers of this *Review*. The two English delegates from the LCS, Maurice Margarot and Joseph Gerald, were arrested with William Skirving and Thomas Muir, who were convicted and sentenced to fourteen years transportation to Botany Bay along with the Rev Thomas Fysshe Palmer who received seven years. Both Skirving and Gerald were not to survive long after their arrival in Australia. Only Margarot, who was a strong man with a ready wit and undaunted courage, was to return too Britain to die in poverty in 1818. Thomas Muir managed to escape to France, while Palmer was to complete his sentence, only to die of dysentry on the voyage home.

The English Societies held meetings, called for resolutions and decided on another convention this time in England, to which the Scottish Societies were asked to send delegates. The government through their spies took alarm and again decided to prevent the coming convention taking place.

On May 12th 1794, in the early morning, the Kings messenger arrived at Hardy's house with a warrant for his arrest on a charge of High Treason for the seditious practices of The London Corresponding Society.

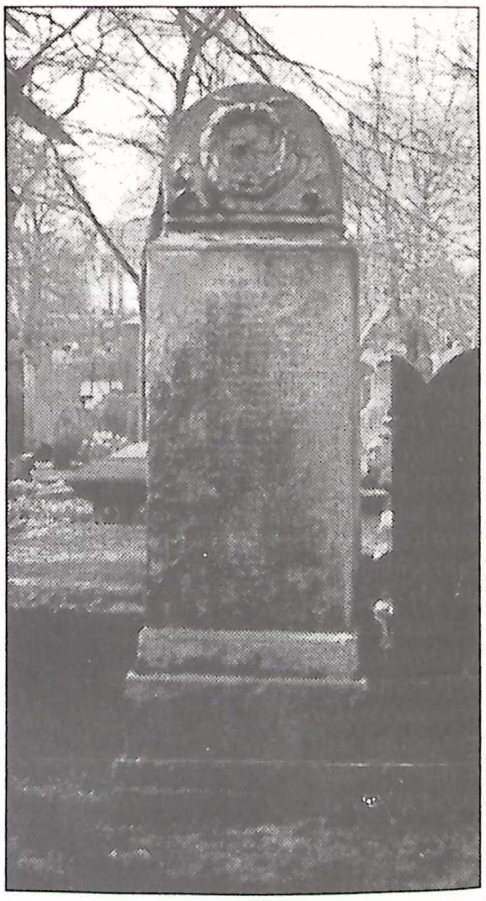
On the 29th May he was committed to the Tower of London, with ten other members of the LCS. It was at this time that Hardy's wife's health rapidly declined – she was to die in child birth.

When the trial took place it took the Attorney General nine hours in opening the case for the government. The trial was to last nine days and Hardy was found not guilty along with the other society members and was acquitted. Over the next year repression of reformers was renewed and by the end of the decade The London Corresponding Society was outlawed, Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* banned, and meetings prohibited.

Through friends, Hardy was to start business as a shoemaker and in the first few weeks orders flooded in, but as his popularity waned so gradually business fell away. Hardy at this time was preoccupied with his own affairs and did not resume an active part in the LCS which was being torn apart by dissension. While in the City of London he became a Freeman of the Cordwainers Company and a Liveryman of the Needlemakers Company.

During the last years of his life Hardy was supported by an annuity contributed by Sir Frances Burdent and other friends. He died in Pimlico, London on the 11th October 1832 at the age of eighty-one and is buried in Bunhill Fields Cemetery, City Road, London.

Derek Annis



Grave of Thomas Hardy in Bunhill Fields Cemetery, City Road, London.

Personal Experiences from a Lifetime in the Communist and Labour Movements

The miners have played an important part in the history of the Scottish Labour Movement, especially in the first half of the 20th Century.

Along with the engineers, shipbuilders and railway men they formed the industrial base, were the creators of wealth and were among the best organised workers. They also faced the most ruthless employers in the country who were aided and abetted by the Government in their determination to smash the miners and their organisation.

My father, like thousands of others, had returned from the First world War at the end of 1918, having survived the horrors of Ypres and Flanders to the only job he knew, as a miner in the Lanarkshire coal field.

The "land fit for heroes" the slogan said, but for the miners and workers generally it was more often said "You'd need to be a hero to survive in the land." The post-war slump led to savage cuts in the miners' wages and in reply to the actions of the men and their Union, the coal-owners locked the men out. "The Great Lock-out" as it was called lasted for nearly six months, right into the winter of 1921.

It was in the aftermath of that shattering event for the miners and their families that I was born on January 2nd 1922.

I was only four years old when the General strike hit the nation but folded in a matter of days.

The miners, who felt utterly betrayed by the leaders of the General Strike, continued the struggle and were again locked-out by the coal-owners in the great lock-out of 1926 which lasted into the winter in places. Only the strong support of the Co-ops in many villages, allowing credit to miners' families and providing supplies to the soup kitchens, prevented serious deprivation in the villages.

The late 1920's and early 1930's were filled with school lessons and a goodly share of learning from the school of hard knocks. At home, from the age of nine or ten, I was as adept at carrying "the wean" in the shawl (plaid) as many of the young mothers in the village. Other family chores like "getting the messages", "black leading" the grate, brushing and polishing a line of boots and shoes or washing dishes left me less time than I wanted for playing football. While trying to read or do home lessons with a growing number of infants around, in a butt and ben in the miners rows, took a Herculean effort.

The efforts of miners' wives to keep their homes clean, windows shining, their pride in their white washings is something that left an indelible mark on myself. All this effort in the midst of dry closets and middens for the rubbish. Many did not even have running water inside the house others; as our own later, had a cold tap but all hot water came from pots or kettle on the open fire.

In January 1936 I left school and started work with Jas Macgregor & Sons, Grainmillers, for the handsome wages of 8/- per week for a 50 hour week. Overtime was 4d an hour. If I travelled by bus it cost me 3/6d so I had to buy a bicycle at £6.10/- and pay it up on hire purchase.

While the milling side of the work interested me most of it was hard and heavy. It was not organised and after three years I left and went into the pit.

By then my wages at the mill had increased to £1 per week, but overtime was still 4d an hour.

Being seventeen, strong and able, there was no easy option for me. It was straight to mine driving and work at the coal-face. That was to change many things in my life. Within six months I was involved in my first industrial action and my first experience of the bosses' effort to divide and rule. The oncost workers (underground haulage etc.) went on strike for a 1/- a day increase and I was selected as one of their spokesmen. The manager then first refused to accept me as a spokesman as I was not strictly an oncost worker and was already paid more as a mine-driver. When that ruse didn't work and the lads made it clear I was still to be a spokesman, I was then offered the extra 1/- for myself and my brother who was on the same job on the other shift. We stayed with the lads and the case was won the following week.

The increased income was a welcome relief to my parents. The thirties had their share of unemployment, and when possible my father had worked overtime to make ends meet.

By 1939, however, years of working in low dusty workings had taken its toll and he was suffering recurrent problems with his chest, which was at that time merely called bronchitis. In reality he had a serious case of pneumoconiosis and silicosis, from which he died in 1951 at the age of 56 after many years of horrible suffering. There was no compensation for such diseases in those days.

On the 4th September 1939 the war started and on 26th October my brother John and his work-mate were killed. He was on the same job as myself, on alternate shifts. His death further raised my anger at the merciless nature of the old coal-owners. He was killed at 10.30am, having started work at 7am. I lifted his pay packet o the Friday and discovered they had docked half a shift from his wages because he didn't complete his shift. The compensation my parents received for his death totalled £50 because he was not the sole bread winner. From that point my political education and action started in earnest.

A month after my brother's death we were allocated a new council house in Larkhall - father, mother and the nine remaining children. For the first time we had a bathroom and hot water. At last we were away from the middens and dry closets. I had space to read, study, and sometimes have lengthy discussions with like-minded friends in my ever growing interest in the issues of the day, or Marxism, philosophy, literature, poetry, music or any other subject of interest. There was also the war effort.

As the war continued, increasing political activity along with charity work as a singer in a local concert party, a fairly hectic social life and heavy work in the pit sometimes led

Family and friends in Alex Clark's childhood mining village.

to a state of near exhaustion, but somehow the adrenaline seemed to keep me going.

The closure of Swinhill Pit in 1942 and my transfer to Douglas Colliery (Ponfeigh Pit) led to me joining the Communist Party. Prior to that move I was active in but had not joined the Labour Party. That possibility ended when a friend of my mother's, a Labour Councillor, said she thought I should joint the Labour Party as there were "good jobs for young fellows like me in the Labour Party."

At Ponfeight I saw workers' participation that really worked. The old contracting system, which lined the pockets of a few who never dug the coal, was ended. "Pool runs" were established with all the workers sharing the benefits of increased output. A record was set for output and safety during these war years that was second to none. The Communists were prominent in all the activity and I became the first of the few on the Larkhall bus who joined the Party.

Support for the war was total and if there was inspiration to be gained and support given to the glorious efforts of the Red Army or the people of the besieged cities of Leningrad, Stalingrad or Moscow, it was the problems of our own people, during the war and in its aftermath, that dominated the activities of C.P. members and supporters.

From 1943 onwards the C.P. in Scotland and the Area Committees of the C.P. were discussing and producing plans for post-war development. Political discussions and actions on the need for a Second Front to speed the end of the war, support for funds to alleviate some of the tragedies of the war, in the mines, factories and shipyards, were already being supplemented by discussions on winning the peace.

Government Agencies were already actively involved in surveys, plans, etc. that were supposed to bring about blueprints for Clydeside, Lothians, Fife and elsewhere in Scotland. The C.P. was emphasising the major needs of Housing, Peacetime Planning, Jobs for the Future, Health and Schools. Pamphlets on all these issues were being produced in Lanarkshire, Glasgow, Fife, West Lothian and elsewhere and were being welcomed by the workers.

The first pamphlet I ever handled was "Housing - Lanarkshire Must Act", which sold tens of thousands and of which I sold over 2,000 round the miners rows and housing schemes in the Larkhall area.

It may seem strange in present day circumstances to talk of selling a pamphlet on housing in housing schemes which were built just prior to the war, but some of these houses had not one but two, and sometimes more of the married sons or daughters living with them. Most of them had at least one room sub-let. There was a severe housing crisis at the end of the year in 1945.

Tenants Associations sprung up everywhere in the post-war period. Personally my wife Jessie and I were two and a half years in my parents' room after we were married in 1946.

The first housing case I was ever involved with, was on behalf of a couple who had been 16½ years in a sub-let room. It was a case we won against officialdom and petty corruption. But the expression of sheer joy on that woman's face when she was handed a key for that house was a moment to savour.

On a trip to the Soviet Union.

It was a regular occurrence while we were still living in a single room for me to arrive home from backshift and find two or more people waiting to discuss their housing problems and hoping I could help.

Throughout the country Communists were at the heart of campaigns for houses at affordable rents. In the cities, especially Glasgow, a new development took place when squatters took over many of the large empty properties throughout the city.

Rents became a fiercely debated issue in The Labour Movement. Standardisation of Rents was being proposed by some Councils, including some Labour Councils. The burgeoning Tenants Associations and many Trade Unions saw this as an attempt at increasing the rents of pre-war housing schemes which were badly in need of upgrading after years of neglect during the war. Even Communists, many of whom were Councillors found themselves on different sides. But the strength of the movement against Standardisation prevailed. At least temporarily.

During the early post-war years, before the onset of the worst years of the Cold War, many Communist Councillors were elected in Scotland. Some became legends in their own areas. Among them were people elected in the 1920s and 1930s.

In Fife John McArthur, the miners leader, Rab Smith, Alex Moffat, miners leader, Bob Selkirk, Willie Sharp and many others were household names. In Lanarkshire Pat Devine, Barney McCourt and later Jimmie Sneddon. In Dunbartonshire Dan O'Hare, Hugh McIntyre, Duncan McGowan and others led to the Vale of Leven being called "Little Moscow".

Dan O'Hare even became the longest serving member of the County Council. When the Tory Convenor of the Council announced that Councillor O'Hare was "father of the Council", Dan in his inimitable style stood up, looked round the benches opposite and stated, "faither o' the coonci and well I never thocht I would have reared such a bunch of bastards." Clydebank had outstanding service from Arnold Henderson, Finlay Hart and Jock Smith. And Phil Canning in Greenock was another of the many who were outstanding advocates of the people's cause. Jimmie Reid was also elected to the Council in Clydebank but I fear Council work was never Jimmie's strong point.

In 1943 the 6 Districts of the Scottish Miners Federation voted to become the National Union of Scottish Mineworkers. By the end of 1943 a ballot of the members confirmed the decision and by March 1944 amalgamation was a reality. Abe Moffat, Fife, became President; James Cook, Clackmannan, Secretary; and William Pearson, Lanarkshire, Treasurer. Also in 1944, other districts of the Miners Federation amalgamated and the National Union of Mineworkers became a reality. With it a long held dream had been fulfilled and Scotland became NUM (Scottish Area)

The miners played their part in the Labour victory of 1945. Hopes were high and the Labour programme "Let's Face the Future" now seemed assured. It was not expected to bring about Socialism but advances in living standards for the mass of the people seemed a measurable goal. Our new Alliance with the Soviet Union and the routing of the fascists throughout Europe also gave added hope for co-operation between the Nations of Europe and advance towards Socialism in many countries. The so-called Marshall Plan and Churchill's Fulton speech in 1946 showed that the wind was blowing from a different airt. Even so the Education Act, the Health Service, Housing programme, rationing and Nationalisation of the mines and transport were all welcomed by ordinary people and were far-seeing compared to the present hotch potch of Tony Blair's attempts to outdo the Tories. Unfortunately between 1945 and 1950 big business had once again won the day and the Labour Government were again in hock to International Capital, and the American Government was dictating foreign policy.

At home Nationalisation, which had promised so much, was being throttled by high compensation to the former owners, and Boards made up of Brigadiers, big business and representatives who had ruined the coal industry, with only token representation

from the Labour movement.

Vesting day for Nationalisation, January 1st 1947, was a day of celebration but the reality never matched the possibility. The wartime experience had proven to many that the miners and their representatives had an important part to play if Nationalisation was to succeed, but the Labour Government did not use that experience.

Arthur Horner, General Secretary of the NUM and a Communist, was offered a seat on the Coal Board and refused when he discovered he was to be the sole representative of the Labour and Trade Union Movement. Abe Moffat in Scotland did likewise. Despite pressure from the Trade Unions very little changed.

Until September 1948, I was still travelling to work, 14 miles to and from, as were many miners in Central Lanarkshire where most of the pits had closed. By 1948 transferred miners were being offered houses in other areas, Lothians, Clackmannan, Ayrshire and Fife. New houses were being built at Rigside and we moved there. Within a few weeks I was drawn into the activities of the villages Rigside and Douglas Water, and a whole new experience began.

There was an adult population of approximately 1,100 in the twin villages of Rigside and Douglas Water, with active branches of both the Labour Party and Communist Party. There was also a pit branch of the CP which was 100 strong - in a pit of 1,000 miners. The place was a hive of activities - political, social and cultural - which were too numerous to mention here, but in outline there were 2 football teams - Douglas Water Thistle (Juniors) and Douglas Water Primrose (Juveniles), both with their fair share of trophies and of players who went on to greater things - Ian St John, Motherwell and Scotland, and Jim Davidson, Partick Thistle and Scotland being the most notable. There were 2 drama groups, a silver band, pipe band, bowling, tennis and golf clubs, all run by the miners, their wives and families. In addition there were the usual social committees including the Old Folks Treat and Gala Day Committees. Many of these activities were supported by the Trade Union Branch and the local Co-op Board, which in the late 1940s was the only remaining unpaid Board in Scotland.

Before we had even time to settle in our new abode, we were approached by the local CP Branch Committee and the Lanarkshire Area Secretary, Davie Reid. I agreed to take the responsibility of Branch Secretary and Jessie was set to become a main pillar of the Branch as Dues Secretary, literature seller, *Daily Worker* organiser and a multiplicity of other responsibilities. My own responsibilities, like Topsy, "just growed". Locally I was elected to the NUM Branch Committee and to the Co-op Board. My wider responsibilities grew with election to the Scottish Miners Gala Committee and to CISWO Ayrshire Area Committee (Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation). My Party responsibilities increased likewise as campaigning grew and I became more involved in the Lanarkshire Area CP and its Executive Committee. Looking back I wonder how I survived these trips from Rigside to Motherwell weekly; the late returns and early starts at the pit, allied to all the local meetings and activities. For there was never a shortage of action.

When the Stockholm Appeal to Ban the Bomb was launched in 1950, a campaign was mounted throughout Lanarkshire which embraced church leaders, the political parties, trade unions and many other local organisations. In South Lanark the campaign spread and was led from Douglas Water. The response was enormous but it stemmed from work on the doorsteps, signature collections in every town and village, at church services or at any gathering of the people in the communities. Is there any campaign today which carries such dedication and determination?

Among the memorable events of that period was the link between the village (Douglas Water/Rigside) and the mining village of Lidice, Czechoslovakia, where the Nazis massacred most of the adult population during the war. A scroll signed by all the children of Douglas Water school was presented to their counterparts in the school at Lidice. It was presented to them via the Deputy Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia, and can still be seen in the museum of Lidice.

The Miners Union Branch in the village was the sponsor of a visit to the area by Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop with the anti-bomb play *Uranium 235*. Ewan McColl, George Cooper and Harry H. Corbett were among those who performed in the show, made even more memorable by the lighting of John Bury.

In 1951 I was selected as a lay delegate from the Scottish N.U.M. to be part of the first mixed T.U. Delegation to visit the Soviet Union after the war. There was an assorted lot of 28 people on the Delegation and we visited Moscow, Leningrad, Sverdlovsk, Donetz, Tula, Stalingrad and Gorki.

Whatever the preconceived ideas of the members of that group may have been, the sheer scale of the war devastation was awesome. At Stalingrad the coach was weaving past huge bomb craters to reach the city. In Leningrad and in Stalingrad workers were actually living in some of these dugouts, with corrugated sheets making the walls and the roofs, while they carried on rebuilding the city. There were immense efforts being made to rebuild the towns, cities and villages and if the experts later slagged much of what was built during that period it must have been a huge relief to the families who occupied them after years of war, bombings, siege with bitter winters without adequate food, and the years that followed trying to rebuild their lives.

There wasn't a family in the land that hadn't suffered losses and many were almost wiped out. Their spirit was an inspiration and the universal cry for Peace in the World was in sharp contrast to the cynicism of the Anti-Communist campaign that was already being mounted in the West.

There was nothing phoney about the heartfelt expressions of the people in the Soviet Union; peace was a great need as well as their desire if there was to be any hope of making progress. The effect on every member of that delegation was overwhelming. A few however, in later years, after the effects of the experience had worn off, became tools of the anti-communist campaign and did well materially from it. How they live with their conscience is their problem.

Further visits to the Soviet Union in the years 1958, 1963 and 1965, while still admiring many of the achievements following the devastation of the war years, allowed me to make a more critical appraisal of the workings of the Communist Party and the lack of any real discussion at local level on the problems to be solved whether local, national or international. All the desire was still there, for peace, international co-operation between states etc.

The assistance given to the emerging nations of the "Third World", to Cuba and to those struggling against apartheid or against dictatorship and for human rights was in sharp contrast to the attitude of the U.S. government and of the slavish following of their policy by the British government. Cuba and South Africa were outstanding examples. But the philosophy of "the leaders know best" was deeply entrenched and in stark contrast to the organisational principles of the Party, which even Stalin had contributed to in earlier years. In place of Democratic Centralism there was Centralism without the democracy. Tony Blair has learned it well. It can be very effective for a period but it ignores the fact that people who are part of an organisation whose whole raison d'être is the community interest, whether local, national or international, are not all morons. Socialist organisations even more so. If a series of individuals see their role being that of conveying the leader's wishes to the masses. Bureaucracy flourishes but the lifeblood dies and people of ideas, initiative, energy and the knowledge, if they don't fight such tendencies, give up. Those that say it couldn't happen here ignore the fact that it has already happened here. Tony Blair and his cohorts are completely ignoring or reversing policies of the Labour Party without any consultation, discussion or resolution of the movement and then denigrating any member who stands up for the democratic process as "living in the past", "traditionalist" or any other epithet which may make it appear that the fount of all knowledge lies with the core of the leadership who agree with him. The power of the media is then used to highlight the soundbites of the leadership, cursorily deal with individual opponents as if it was a personal battle and create the general impression that any proper discussion airing contrary views is disloyalty to the leadership. This creates and perpetuates the myth that opposing the leadership can be equated with disloyalty to the Party.

It happenend in the C.P.G.B. and brought about its demise. But more of that later.

Alex Clark

Grassic Gibbon's Glasgow

On 4 January 1919 *The Scottish Farmer* announced the appoint ment of a new reporter, '... Mr J. Leslie Mitchell, a farmer's son, from Kincardineshire, who has been for some time on the staff of the *Aberdeen Journal*.' In his biography of Leslie Mitchell, later to become better known as Lewis Grassic Gibbon, Ian S. Munro tells us that he was appointed a junior reporter in February that year. In either case, he arrived in Glasgow about the time of the Battle of George Square on 31 January, when Gallacher, Kirkwood and Shinwell were arrested, and about the time of Guy Aldred's arrival in Glasgow on 3 February. Yet we have no firm information about Gibbon's awareness of the political agitation of the time in Glasgow or of his membership of a party or group.

Gibbon was eighteen on 13 February 1919. But we know that he had been politically aware at an earlier age. In the 'Aberdeen' essay in *Scottish Scene* Gibbon writes about

> '... the founding of the Aberdeen Soviet when the news of the Bolshevik Revolution came through from Russia; and how I and a cub reporter from another paper attended the foundation meeting; and were elected to the Soviet Council, forgetting we were pressmen ...' (p.203)

The brief existence of the Aberdeen Soviet and Gibbon's attendance at one meeting have both been confirmed. He was admonished by his Chief Reporter and did not return. In the same essay Gibbon tells us that he tried to interview Krassin when he '... was deported from England by way of Aberdeen ...'. (His description matches a photograph of Krassin though there is no evidence that the latter was in this country at that time. He may have interviewed another Bolshevik, e.g. M.M. Litvinov, who was deported from Aberdeen in September 1918.)

Gibbon did, however, write about Glasgow in a section of his second novel, *The Thirteenth Disciple*, first published in January 1931, republished in 1981; in the synopsis for an autobiography, 'Memoirs of a Materialist'; in the 'Glasgow' essay in *Scottish Scene*; and on two occasions, in letters.

Of these, the pages of the novel which refer to Glasgow, (67–118 in the 2nd edition), are the most intriguing in a search for the author's involvement in the politics of his time there. Of the semi-autobiographical character, Malcolm Maudslay, Gibbon writes:

> 'After extensive research among the war-shattered fragments of the British Socialist Party he had joined a seceding wing, the Left Communist Group of Glasgow. That was in January. In mid-February, such was the power of his youthful enthusiasm and sincerity, he found himself elected the Group 'co-secretary'. ... The Group was aggressively anti-war and anti-constitutional...'

Although in the novel, Maudslay comes to Glasgow in the autumn of 1914, Gibbon might have been in Glasgow in January 1919 and might have joined a Group in that month, and ascribed it to his character.

The British Socialist Party had been established at a Unity Conference in Manchester at the beginning of October 1911 and was one of the Parties which came together to form the CPGB in 1920. During the War, it was divided into pro-war and anti-war factions but had not disintegrated into 'war-shattered fragments'. In fact, the pro-war faction was in the minority at the Salford Conference in 1916 and left the Party) though *Justice* remained under its control.

Gibbon was clearly aware of the position taken up by *Justice* from the outbreak of war. He refers to his character's reading in his schooldays: 'The only socialist periodical procurable in Dundon was *Justice* ... and through its influence Malcom imagined himself a National Socialist, as patriotic as anybody.' According to Alexander Gray, the Arbuthnott dominie, Gibbon had himself tried to join up at Castlehill Barracks in Aberdeen. But after Malcom Maudslay had joined the Left Communist Group of Glasgow, Gibbon comments: 'He was far from the 'National Socialist' patriotism of Dundon.'

Early in 1915 it would not have been at all clear that the pro-war faction would be the 'seceding wing'. Therefore there might well have been a basis for a group like the Left Communist Group of Glasgow, which is clearly fictional.

There were several models for the name. As early as 1912 a Communist Propaganda Group had been formed in Glasgow by Guy Aldred. Aldred's biographer, John Taylor Caldwell, tells us that during his years in jail the members of his Group merged informally with anarchists. Glasgow anarchists had arranged Aldred's meeting on 3 February 1919, and the title of their Group had now become Glasgow Communist Group, the nearest match to Gibbon's fictional group (though this may be coincidence). Guy Aldred is the only revolutionary figure (in Scotland) to whom Gibbon refers by name, and one of the epigraphs to *The Thirteenth Disciple* is a pro-anarchist quotation from Anatole France. Of course, at the time of the formation of the CPGB several parties included 'Communist' in their titles.

Of the Group in *The Thirteenth Disciple* we hear only of the office-bearers and a little of their views. The chairman is given as an unnamed 'engineer from the shipyards'; Malcom Maudslay is a reporter, the other secretary is 'the white-bearded Anton Meierkhold, then a Professor of Russian Literature and now an exile in Siberia from the Sovyets'; and the anonymous treasurer is 'an evicted schoolmaster, an enthusiastic and ambitious and robust young conscientious objector'. It is difficult to agree with the author that they were representative socialists. Of the ordinary, presumably working-class members, we hear only that at one of the infrequent Group dances Malcom's girl-friend '... danced with partners who discoursed industrial unionism and passive resistance...'.

The inference must be that Gibbon had little connection with the working-class at that time and related only to individual 'revolutionaries'. He writes that Malcom '... helped to engineer the great shipyard strike of that year...'. How could a reporter have done this? And the February strike of 1915 was a strike of engineers. Working-class activities of this time which might have been represented include the rent strikes, the organisation against the Munitions Act which forbade workers to strike or change their jobs, John Maclean's great meetings in Bath Street and his Economics and Industrial History Classes, attended by about 400 students. In 1919, the strike was for the 40-hour week.

In 1934 Gibbon wrote the synopsis for 'Memoirs of a Materialist' in the form of a scenario. 'Glasgow Nights' were to be shown in the second reel: '... direct shots of the author's life in his second job – reporter in Glasgow.' The scenario script was to be an 'essay on the class war from the viewpoint of one who in origins (peasant) was outside the war.'[1]

Yet there are realistic hints that Gibbon did know what was happening in Glasgow in his time (and before and after). In *Revolt on the Clyde* William Gallacher describes an incident in the Battle of George Square. Some of the workers seize a big heavy lorry, loaded with boxes of aerated waters. 'With the utmost rapidity the boxes were piled up across the street, piled up on their sides with the necks of the bottles ready to the hands of those who were manning the impromptu

barricade.' (London, 1949, p.231) In his description of the demonstration in the Royal Mile in *Grey Granite* in 1934 Gibbon refers to '... the brewery lorry jammed by the pavemant, full of empty bottles...' (Canongate Classics 34, p.57)

Nan Milton refers to the police raid on the Socialist Labour Press in 1916 and John Taylor Caldwell to the raid on the Bakunin Press in 1921. In *The Thirteenth Disciple* Gibbon refers to the Group journal '... which was twice suppressed and its plant smashed in police raids.'

Maudslay, the character, suffers for his idealism, and it is more than likely that Gibbon, the author, did the same. Maudslay is suspended from his paper, the *Daily Tribune*, for forging bills for more than £60. He had used the money to pay printers' bills for the Left Group weekly and delegates' fares. Ian S. Munro tells us that Gibbon was dismissed from *The Scottish Farmer* in precisely the same circumstances. But that doesn't prove that he required the money for the same reason.

Both character and author attempted to commit suicide after the forgeries had been discovered. In the novel Maudslay stops up every opening which lets in air and turns on the gas. Gibbon's widow recorded that he took laudanum.[2]

Malcom Maudslay left Glasgow on 25 November 1915 to enlist at a recruiting office in Carlisle three days later. Gibbon went home temporarily to Kincardineshire and joined the RASC on 26 August 1919. His post on *The Scottish Farmer* had been advertised on 28 June 1919.

Gibbon's 'Glasgow' essay in *Scottish Scene* is written in an exaggerated tone, a fantastic superstructure on a seriously-perceived base i.e. the concerns of the Thirties, the 150,000 living in 'single ends', the political outlooks of the period. The part of the essay which is best-known now has been highlighted by Hugh MacDiarmid's equally exaggerated counter. Gibbon writes:

> 'There is nothing in culture or art that is worth the life and elementary happiness of one of those thousands who rot in the Glasgow slums. There is nothing in science or religion. If it came (as it may come) to some fantastic choice between a free and independent Scotland, a centre of culture, a bright flame of artistic and scientific achievement, and providing elementary decencies of food and shelter to the submerged proletariat of Glasgow and Scotland, I at least would have no doubt as to which side of the battle I would range myself. For the cleansing of that horror, if cleanse it they could, I would welcome the English in suzerainty over Scotland till the end of time. I would welcome the end of Braid Scots and Gaelic, our culture, our nationhood under the heels of a Chinese army of occupation if it could cleanse the Glasgow slums, give a surety of food and play - the elementary right of every human being - to those people of the abyss...' (p.119)

In his essay 'Lewis Grassic Gibbon' written in 1944, published in 1946 in *Scottish Art and Letters* 2, Hugh MacDiarmid made the counter:

> 'This, alas, is just hooey - 'sound and fury signifying nothing.' A purple passage of emotional humanism - the very antithesis of the way in which these evils can ever be overcome. As I have said, in one of my poems, I on the other hand would sacrifice a million people any day for one immortal lyric.' (p.43)

In the MS of 'Red Scotland' which was written in the spring of 1935, but not published, MacDiarmid quoted the Gibbon passage from *Scottish Scene* on Glasgow given above, and remarked: 'So would I, only I know it is not to be got in these ways.'[3]

In a letter to Helen Cruickshank written on 18 November 1933 i.e. around the time he was writing his contributions to *Scottish Scene*, Gibbon makes the same point in the same exaggerated tone:

> 'Ancient Scotland is never Queen Mary: it's those serfs they kept chained in the Fifeshire mines a hundred years ago... But the filthy conspiracy of silence there was in the past! - and is coming again in Scotland, in a new guise, called Renaissance, and Objectivity, and National Art and what not. Blithering about Henryson and the Makars (whoever these cretins were) and forgetting the Glasgow slums ...'[4]

The most moving account of the Glasgow slums remains *The Cancer of Empire* by William Bolitho, published in 1924. MacDiarmid's 'Third Hymn to Lenin', written in 1935, expresses the same feeling in poetry. The 'Crisis on Clydeside' chapter of Allen Hutt's *The Condition of the Working Class in Britain* (1933) deals with the factual side in a less emotional tone than Bolitho.

Gibbon's last comment on Glasgow occurs in another letter to Helen Cruickshank written in the autumn of 1934, simply dated 'Tuesday'. He had received a letter from Dr Fritz Wölcken and writes to Helen Cruickshank who had introduced them:

> 'I must go back to Wölcken (though indeed I'm going to write to him to-morrow). He seems to think & hope that Grey Granite's (Ewan's) solution of the world's ills will be - return to Nature a la Gay Hunter! This is shocking. How could a Glasgow keelie in the year 1934 achieve Nature - go and hide on Ben Lomond & live on stolen turnips?[5]

We can readily understand that when Gibbon first came to Glasgow he was less than two years away from his crofting roots and might not easily identify with the industrial working class at that time. But it is difficult to accept the use of 'keelie' by a socialist author in his thirties. We try to imagine what he would have written in the essay he had projected, also in 1934, 'on the class war from the viewpoint of one who in origins (peasant) was outside the war.' But in less than a year after writing to Fritz Wölcken, he was dead. However, there can be no doubt as to where Gibbon's sympathies lay.

And though seventy-eight years have passed since Gibbon came to Glasgow, it may not be too late to hope that a minute book of the Group to which he almost certainly belonged in his six months there may yet be discovered.

John Manson

References

1 NLS MS 26060 ff 36-42
2 Michael James McGrath, 'James Leslie Mitchell (Lewis Grassic Gibbon)', Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1983, p.468.
3 NLS MS 27035 f 99
4/5 EUL Gen 1929/12

MS sources are quoted by permission of the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh University Library and Dr McGrath. I am grateful to Dr Douglas F. Young for the information about Gibbon's attempt to enlist.

Works Consulted

John Broom, *John Maclean*, Loanhead, 1973; John Taylor Caldwell, *Come Dungeons Dark*, Barr, 1988; William Gallacher, Revolt on the Clyde, London, 1949; Nan Milton, *John Maclean*, London, 1973; Ian S. Munro, *Leslie Mitchell: Lewis Grassic Gibbon*, Edinburgh and London, 1966.

LEFT ON THE SHELF

SECOND HAND CATALOGUE NO. 8

Spring 1996

Trade Unions

7 HAMBLEDON HOUSE
CRICKETFIELD ROAD
LONDON
E3 2NT

Tel 0181 983 2090 Fax 0181 533 5821

1820 Society Report

The Society was favoured at this year's annual March & Rally in honour of the 'Strathaven martyr' **JAMES WILSON**, which took place on 25 May, by the attendance of the Depute Convener of the new South Lanarkshire Council, **Councillor ESTHER SERRELS.** Councillor Serrels paid tribute to the martyr's "commitment to the struggle for human rights", and wondered what "he would have thought of the progress... that had been achieved since his day." She concluded that "we cannot be complacent" and "must work together, whatever our political affiliations" to continue the struggle.

CHARLIE BOYLE spoke next on behalf of the SNP's East Kilbride Constituency Association. And while he emphasised the 'Scottish dimension' in the struggle of the 1820 martyrs, as highlighted in the Strathaven Radicals' banner, bearing the slogan, ***Scotland Free or a Desert,*** he also recognised that the Radicals' agenda extended to "social and economic reform" – which could not, however, be achieved "without political Reform".

The last of the guest speakers was the historian, **Dr. JIM YOUNG**, a last-minute replacement for his fellow-historian, **ELSPETH KING**, who had to pull out. This was fortuitous as it gave Jim the opportunity to bring the Society's members up to date with the latest historical research into Radical history he had been carrying out as preparation for his forthcoming book, *The Very Bastards of Creation*, a comprehensive study of Scottish Radicalism from 1688 to the present day which was soon to be published by Clydeside Press.

Dr. Young located **WILSON** as well as his fellow 1820 Radicals, **BAIRD** and **HARDIE**, in the Radical tradition which had emerged in Scotland in the aftermath of the American and French Revolutions. Way back in 1793 – following **THOMAS MUIR's** sedition trial – Wilson himself had been a delegate to the third Edinburgh Convention of the *Friends of the People.* From the glorious example of Muir and his fellow 'Scotch political martyrs', packed off to Botany Bay by the infamous 'hanging judge', Lord Braxfield, the Radicals had learnt the courage to speak out for "the Truth against the World".

Dr. Young was particularly keen to emphasise the otherwise little-known role in the 1790s agitation of **JAMES THOMPSON CALLENDER**, a contemporary political pamphleteer who had subsequently fled to the United States where he had helped Jefferson in his successful campaign for the Presidency in 1800. Curiously, Callender, as well as being a 'Scottish Jacobin', had some residual Jacobite – or, in the 18th century context, 'Scottish Nationalist' – sympathies.

In June the Society's members were saddened by the death in his 81st year of a former Chairman and Honorary Life Member, **JACK FULLER**. In the mid-1980s Jack had played a key role in the successful financial appeal the Society had then launched for the renovation of the Sighthill Monument in memory of **BAIRD** and **HARDIE** at a cost of £10,000. He had later designed the Society's grand new banner, purchased in 1989, and had negotiated an affordable price from the flag manufactuers; appropriately it adorned his coffin at his cremation.

Despite failing health Jack had subsequently put a great deal of time and effort into discussions with monumental sculptors regarding the technical feasibility of attaching a plaque to the Sighthill Monument in memory of the 19 Scots Radicals transported to Botany Bay in 1820. And it was a particularly proud moment for him when the plaque was finally unveiled in September 1993. The Society will sadly miss his wise advice and assistance.

At the time of writing the usual rallies in memory of the martyrs are being planned for the late summer – at Woodside cemetery in Paisley in August, and at Sighthill in September on the anniversary of the executions of Baird and Hardie. The inspiring **'175th Commemoration Address'** given last year at Sighthill by the Society's Honorary President, **PETER BERRESFORD ELLIS** is still relatively fresh in our minds. There was little discernible dissent among the gathering of 100 for his concluding comment that "national and social freedoms are not two separate and unrelated issues" but "two sides of one great democratic principle, each incomplete without the other."

Also on the platform on that occasion was the Booker prize-winning Glasgow writer, **JAMES KELMAN**, author also of an '1820 play', *Hardie and Baird – The Last Days,* who scathingly attacked the campaign of 'disinformation' waged against the 1820 Radicals by the reactionary authorities of the time. The wreath was laid by a visitor from New South Wales, **Mrs. ANGELA LIND**, a descendant of **ALEXANDER JOHNSTON**, one of the 19 men commemorated on the Monument's 'new' plaque. (She kindly presented the Society with a copy of a book, published last year by herself, about the convict ship *Surprize* which took the 'Scottish Martyrs' of the 1790s – including **THOMAS MUIR** – to Botany Bay in 1794.)

Finally, members were fascinated to read the results of our Honorary President's latest '1820' researches in which he managed to track down some hitherto unknown facts about the Condorratt Radical and 1820 martyr **JOHN BAIRD's** previous career in the British Army! (Reproduced in this *Review.*)

Ian Bayne

Councillor Esther Serrels, Depute Convener South Lanarkshire Council, with SNP's Charlie Boyle (left) and Dr. Jim Young (right) at the May 1996 Strathaven rally.

John Baird's Military Career

Having been asked to submit the entry on John Baird for the new edition of the *Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press), I was going through copies of some research documents that Seumas Mac a' Ghobhainn and I were able to uncover, though unfortunately, only after our book had been published. I realised that these documents do not appear to have been referred to by other researchers. They relate to John Baird's military service and are to be found in the London Public Record Office classed as WO12/9577, 9578, 9583, 9584.

Because publication of the DNB is probably a number of years away, I have decided to draw attention now to the details of Baird's army service so that it might prompt new research and (hopefully) new discoveries.

While John Baird was described as 32 years old in 1820, by himself and the trial records and reports, making the year of his birth 1788, the Scottish Old Parochial Records for Stirling, do not record his baptism until September 1, 1790. This took place at Stirling and his parents were James Baird and Isobel Edmond. This does not necessarily contradict a birth in 1788 but two years does appear an exceptionally lengthy period between birth and baptism at this time. His brother Robert, in whose house he was living in Condorrat when the Government *agent provocateur* King sent him off on that fated 'attack' on the Carron Iron Works, was baptised in Stirling on April 8, 1787.

There is an opportunity here for some enterprising researcher to trace more details about the family of James & Isobel Baird for John and Robert had another brother and two sisters.

Although most of the military records relating to John Baird's personal service are missing, from the documents listed above, we know the following facts: John Baird enlisted in the 2nd Battalion of the 95th Regiment of Foot (known as the Rifle Brigade) on September 13, 1806. Baird made his enlistment in Glasgow and was immediately transferred to the battalion's headquarters in Hythe, Kent, where he underwent his basic military training.

John Baird joined a company commanded by Captain Macdonald and within the year became a bugler.

In the war against Napoleon, the United Kingdom's policy was to strike at the overseas possessions of France and its allies. On June 27, 1806, an expeditionary force of 1,500 men under Colonel William Carr Beresford (later Lord Beresford) landed on the coast of Spain's colony of Argentina and made an attempt to seize Buenos Aires. Before Beresford could be reinforced, he was counter-attacked by Santiago de Liniers, a French naval officer in the service of Carlos IV of Spain. Beresford's command were overwhelmed and forced to surrender.

A second British force of 10,000 men, commanded by General John Whitelocke, which had occupied Montevideo, Uruguay, now moved against Buenos Aires in 1807. John Baird was part of this force. The 2nd Battalion of the 95th were sent to Colonia, just opposite Buenos Aires. Baird is listed here, receiving his army pay. Liniers rallied the French and Spanish forces and drove Whitelocke out of the Rio de la Plata area.

Between June 25 and July 24 of 1807 we find John Baird on the transport ship *Osborne*. He is listed as being 'sick aboard'.

There is now a complete absence of documentation about Baird for five years until we pick up his tracks in Spain. Spain had ceased to be Napoleon's ally. Napoleon had sent French troops to occupy Portugal and Spain. Sir Arthur Wellesley (later Duke of Wellington) was sent to the Iberian Peninsula to reinforce the Spanish/Portuguese troops. The 95th went with him and so, obviously, did John Baird.

Of the 95th Regiment, Lt. General Sir John Moore, who was to be killed at La Coruna in 1809, wrote: 'In them it is evident that not only the officers, but that every individual soldier knows perfectly what he has to do; the discipline is carried out without severity; the officers are attached to the men, the men to the officers.'

We find the 95th fighting at the battles of Busaco (1810) and Salamanca (1812). After Salamanca, on August 12, Wellington was able to enter Madrid. The 95th went into garrison duties at the town of Getafe, just south of Madrid. Here we pick up the trail of John Baird once more. His name appears in the pay books of the 2nd battalion at Getafe. He is still serving with Captain Macdonald's company.

In April, 1813, we find that the 2nd battalion, whose colonel was now Sir B. Spencer, had returned to England and was based at Shorncliffe, Folkestone, Kent. It is now that John Baird's military record becomes really interesting. John Baird had gone on furlough (leave) from March 15 until May 22, 1813. He had obviously travelled home to Scotland. We find that, during his furlough, he reported sick and was certified such by the Army's District Surgeon in Glasgow. His leave was extended for one month, and he was due to return to the regiment on June 22.

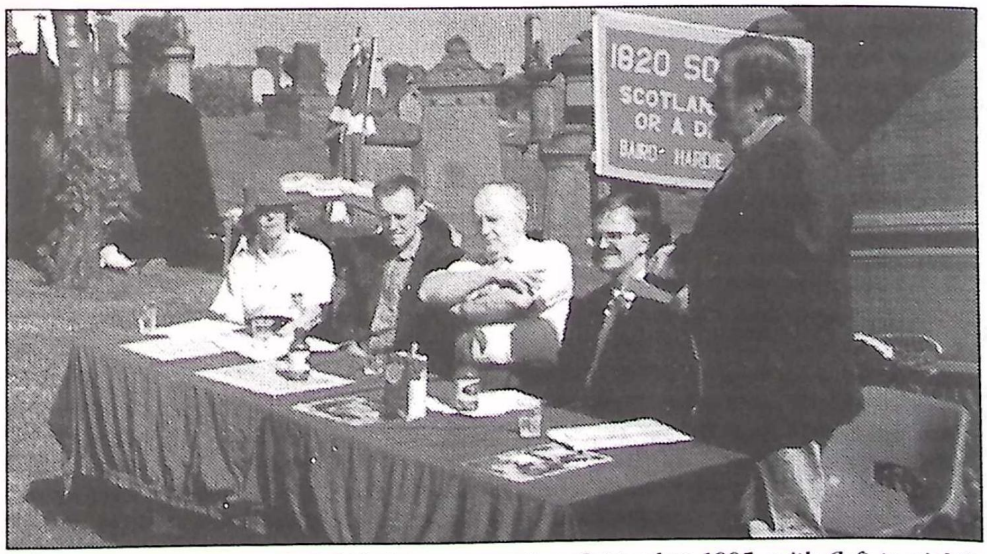
On September 25, John Baird was deemed to have deserted as he had not reported for duty. He had simply disappeared.

Between June, 1813, when he deserted from the army in Glasgow, and April, 1820, when he appeared in Condorrat as commanding the local Radical forces, John Baird's life appears to be shrouded in mystery.

There is no record that the army ever succeeded in arresting him for desertion. Of course, desertion in time of war would have carried the severest penalty anyway. It could well be that Baird went into hiding, like so many others, until 1816 when, with the European war over, tens of thousands of soldiers were demobilised and returned home in search of work. With all the ex-soldiers returning home, it was easy to pass without question.

These are the bare facts. Perhaps some enterprising researchers might like to concentrate on this area of Baird's life? There are many questions to be answered. His record shows that his service until 1813 had been irreproachable. He had not displayed himself as NCO material but he had appeared to be a good, stable soldier. Buglers, 'fifers' and drummers were appointed from steady soldiers and payment was higher than for a private. Baird had received £9 18s on his enlistment. He returned home on leave and suddenly deserted. Why? At what period during his career did he become a Radical in politics? Was it during his army service? Did this have a bearing on his desertion?

Peter Berresford Ellis



Peter Berresford Ellis at Sighthill Commemoration, September 1995, with (left to right) Mrs Angela Lind, James Kelman, Baillie Charles McLafferty, Chair George Jamieson

News from the National Museum of Labour History

Africa in Manchester

The museum celebrated the 50th anniversary of the fifth Pan-African Congress which was held in Manchester in October 1945. The Congress inspired many African and Caribbean leaders in their struggle for independence and became a pacemaker for decolonisation in Africa and the West Indies. It was attended by WEB Du Bois, George Padmore and Wallace Johnson and by some future African heads of state like Jomo Kenyatta and Kwame Nkrumah.

The Congress also greatly influenced black people living in Manchester who saw, many for the first time, that black people could be powerful and influential.

The museum's exhibition used photographs and memorabilia to tell the story of the Congress. We talked to some of the people who attended the Congress who still live in Manchester. Visitors were able to read their memories of the event. The exhibition also used collections from other Manchester museums to illustrate aspects of Africa present in Manchester in the 1940s. Manchester had a significant black presence during the Second World War.

The exhibition launched a programme of collecting and recording the history of black people in Manchester. The museum's collection is sorely lacking in this respect.

We also showed the exhibition White on Black: Images of Africa and Black People in Western Popular Culture. This exhibition was based on the Negrophilia Collection in Amsterdam and revealed the insidious way in which humiliating stereotypes of black people have penetrated western culture. It showed hundreds of images of black people manufactured for everyday use in Europe and the United States over the last two hundred years.

The exhibitions were part of a wider programme, Africa in the World, run by community grroups, arts organisations and educational institutions in Manchester and in Salford to celebrate the anniversary. This included a major international conference at Manchester Town Hall on 13-15 October.

The exhibitions **Africa in Manchester** and **White on Black** ran from 11 October 95 to 14 January 1996 at the **Pump House People's History Museum**, Left Bank, Bridge Street, Manchester and was opened by Tania Makonnen, the daughter of Ras Makonnen, one of the main organisers of the Congress.

Banner Changes at the Pump House

Changes were made, during the sumnier of 1995, to the banners on display in the permanent exhibition gallery. Now on display are a diverse and dramatic selection of banners, including eight which have undergone extensive treatment in the Conservation Studio at Princess Street.

The banner of the Tinplate Workers Society is the oldest in the collection, dating from 1821 and can be seen in the reconstructed Society meeting room.

Clothing the north wall of the gallery are a variety of colourful banners which relate to the permanent display themes. Included are fine examples of banner making and painting. The Northampton Branch Social Democratic Federation banner and the National Union of Operative Bricklayers, Watford Branch, dominate the scene. By contrast, the Pendleton Co-operative Society banner is small, but carries equally powerful imagery. Made by G Kenning and Son, the painted image is based on a design by the Glasgow artist Muirhead Bone.

Soccercity Celebrations

This summer England hosted the 1996 European Championships. Old Trafford, Manchester, the home of Manchester United, staged matches right up to the semi-final. The city welcomed the national teams of Germany, Italy, the Czech Republic and Russia to the first round group matches. The tournament was the largest international sporting event held in this country since the 1966 World Cup and was the most widely watched occasion in European sport this year. The presence of supporters of 16 countries from across the continent ensured it was a carnival of football, colour and passion.

As part of Manchester's celebration of this exciting event the Pump House staged an exhibition based on the people who contribute so much to the atmosphere of football matches, those who genuinely appreciate the beautiful game - the fans. The exhibition was run in association with and supported by the Professional Footballers Association, Manchester City Council, the Football Supporters' Association, the Commission for Racial Equality and the Institute of Popular Culture at Manchester Metropolitan University.

The main thrust of the exhibition was an entertaining look at the international and particularly the European game. We largely reflected on the supporters and their culture, but also dealt with the history of international competition and the exchange of players within Europe. The display was upbeat and colourful while making some serious points on internationalism, national identity and racism. The exhibition used objects, photographs, sound and video to evoke the buzz of international matches.

Claude Boli was one of the people working with the Museum on The Beautiful Game which opened on 3 June and ran until 3 September. Claude, a postgraduate student from France, now living in Manchester, is particularly interested in how foreign football players find living in this country and how British players react to living abroad. He has first hand information from his brother Basil Boli, the international player who used to play for Glasgow Rangers now with Red Diamond in Japan. While Claude has been in Manchester he has interviewed Eric Cantona and the interview formed part of the exhibition, as did one of Cantona's shirts. Key sections of the exhibition were be translated into Italian, German, French, Czech and Russian.

Forthcoming exhibition:

14 September '96 - January 1997
The Spanish Civil War.

The Supporters Association: Just who do they think they are?

The Supporters Association was formed by a group of enthusiastic volunteers a few years ago to help the Museum in its work. It seeks to raise funds, organise visits to other museums, and make links with their Friends' Associations. Supporters receive advance notice of events, the Museum newsletters, and invitations to the openings of exhibitions. They also gain free admission to the Pump House!

The Association has a rolling programme of events. In 1995 we helped with the Heritage Open Day on September 17 (attended by over 170 people), and ran a Peterloo Open Day on Saturday 28 October. The purpose of the Open Day was to raise funds to purchase for the Museum a contemporary linen Peterloo handkerchief and to do this we invited groups of interested parties along to the Pump House for the afternoon. It was a fascinating day - a local historian, Joyce Marlow gave a talk and there were guided tours of the Museum. There was also a social evening on 7 December which included a hotpot supper.

The Supporters' Association always needs extra support. You could help from your armchair by joining us or get really involved by giving up a little of your time. To find out more contact the **Secretary (Craig Homer)** on **0161 434 3570.**

Evening openings for group bookers

The museum can be opened for groups, by prior arrangement, on the second Wednesday of the month. So why not come and meet our helpful and friendly staff who will guide you around the galleries. Visit the 1930s Co-op shop, see the kitchen where Hannah Mitchell campaigned for votes for women, watch Stanley Mathews play for Blackpool in the 1953 Cup final and play your favourite records from the 1950s and 60s on the juke box. And it goes without saying, that some of our world famous collection of trade union banners can be seen on the walls of the galleries. Further info: Andy Pearce or Dot Fenton 0161 839 6061.

The People's History Shop

The National Museum of Labour History has just published a booklet of practical guidance and advice entitled *Care of Trade Union Banners*. Providing safe storage and welfare of the Museum's own collection of over 360 banners highlighted this need and the booklet covers a range of problems from handling and storage of banners currently in use to the long term care and display of old banners which are no longer carried.

The cost of this is £1.50 from our shop and £2.00 by mail order. (Please make cheques payable to *NMLH Trading Co.*).

National Banner Initiative

A series of meetings were hosted in summer 1995 at the Pump House to discuss proposals to form a national partnership on banners. Amongst those attending were representatives of the Co-operative Union, Working Class Movement Library, the Fawcett Library, the National Mining Museum for England, Cynon Valley Museums Service, Woodhorn Colliery Museum, the Textile Conservation Centre, South Wales Miners' Library, Beamish Museum, GMB College, the Foresters Heritage Trust and Tyne and Wear Museums Service.

The initiative consisted of storage, enhanced conservation facilities, a data bank of banners and possibly a gallery with educational programmes.

During 1996, funding for the survey part of the scheme has been received from the Conservation Unit of the Museums and Galleries Commission, and applications have been made for ERDF and Lottery monies. The scheme will consist of four parts.

The Survey of Banners

The survey will establish the scope of the problem and will form the basis of a national database. It will start with the collections held by partners in the Initiative, then go on to banners held in public collections, and then material held in private hands. Information and images will be entered on a computerised database, and CD ROM and internet will be used to disseminate this material.

Conservation Facilities

It would be impossible to conserve all existing banners. The proposal is that established studios, in particular those of the NMLH and the Textile Conservation Centre at Hampton Court, would be strengthened to enable an optimum number of banners (say 10-15) to be conserved annually. Decisions about which banners should be conserved will be based on rarity, historical importance, condition and provenance.

Repository

Banners require a large space if they are stored to conservation standards. A central repository would be set up where partners could deposit banners safely, until they could be conserved. Where partners already have existing small stores, these may be upgraded.

Display and Education

A national banner gallery is envisaged, probably located in an historic building provided by one of the partners. Lively promotional and education programmes will develop the existing public interest in the subject.

New Collections

The museum has recently received a fine collection of political ceramics acquired by the late Hymie Fagan, which commemorate the Peterloo Massacre, the 1832 Reform Act, Chartists, Friendly Societies, and the Swaithe Colliery disaster; also an emblem membership certificate of the South East Manchester branch of the Steam Engine Makers Society 1902; a General Workers Union Dagenham branch banner; a Sunday School banner, Hempshaw Lane Mission Hall; a Conservative & Unionist ribbon badge; a CWS diary 1917, covering period from the battle of Passchendaele, owned by Gunner Jeffcock; a Peterloo commemorative handkerchief 1819, purchased with the help of the Museum's Supporters Association; and GCHQ dispute posters and leaflets; also caricatures of Labour leaders by Ralph Salon, from Lady Hirshfield.

A Legacy to Labour History

Most of us intend to write a will at some time or other, and many of us don't quite get round to doing it – often we think it's a good idea, but not strictly necessary. Writing a will is the **only** way to be absolutely certain that your wishes will be observed and your instructions carried out to the letter.

Funding is always important, and always on our minds. The National Museum of Labour History is fortunate to have been left a variety of objects and bequests which have enhanced the collections and contributed to the development of the museum. The museum spends over £300,000 a year looking after its collections and devising and implementing its exhibition and events programme. If this work interests you, if you share our concern for preserving this unique record of ordinary people's lives, will you consider making a legacy to the museum? For further information telephone Cath Birchall on 0161 228 7212.

National Museum of Labour History, 103 Princess Street, Manchester M1 6DD. Tel: 0161 228 7212
Pump House People's History Museum, Left Bank, Bridge Street, Manchester M3 3ER. Tel: 0161 839 6061.

Home & Away
The Spanish Civil War 60 years on
14 September 1996 ~ 12 January 1997
Museum Galleries, Shop and Clarion Cafe
Tuesday to Sunday 11am to 4.30pm
Open Bank Holidays
Admission £1. Concessions free. Free on Fridays.
The PumpHouse: Peoples History Museum
Left Bank Bridge Street Manchester M3 3ER
0161 839 6061

Communist History Network

When discussions were held last year as to the possibility of a loose network of historians of communism, three main conclusions emerged: that there should be a database of contacts and their research interests; that there should be occasional seminars or workshops; and that there might be a scope for an occasional informal newsletter.

As to research interests, a first listing of these was circulated some time ago and this is now being updated. Any further names, with research interests and a contact address, should be sent to Jane Harden, Dept. of Govt., University of Manchester M13 9PL.

A first workshop was held in Manchester on 3 February, when 46 people attended to hear five papers on 'New Findings from the Moscow Archives'. These were 'The History of the Comintern in the light of New Documents' by Kevin McDermott, 'The CPGB and Comintern: Problems of Control' by Andrew Thorpe, 'Moscow Gold and the Question of Agency: the CPGB in the 1920s' by Kevin Morgan, 'The CPGB, the Comintern and the War 1939-1941: Filling in the Blank Spots' by Monty Johnstone and 'New Archival Sources for Soviet History' by Yoram Gorlizki.

Kevin McDermott's paper drew on his book on the Comintern which is shortly to be published by Macmillan. A full version of Monty Johnstone's paper will be found in a special issue on British communism of the US journal *Science and Society*, to be published later this year. The special issue will also include articles by Neil Barrett (on anti-fascist activities), Francis King (on the CP archives), Steve Parsons (on communist schoolteachers) and Carol Thornton and Willie Thompson (on 1956 in Scotland); a colloquium on communism in the British Empire including Hakim Adi on West Africa, Raj Chandavarkar on India, Allison Drew on South Africa and Emmet O'Connor on Ireland; and reviews by Geoff Eley, Colin Holmes, Richard Hyman and Stuart Macintyre. It is hoped that arrangements will be made to have this issue distributed in the UK.

A second event, on 'A Weapon in the Struggle? Culture and the British Communist Party', was held at the National Museum of Labour History, 103 Princess St., Manchester on Saturday 18 May, 11.00am - 5.00pm. The event was organised by Andy Croft and presented five papers from a book on this theme that Andy is editing for Pluto Press. For information contact Andy direct on 01642 814987. We are particularly grateful to the National Museum of Labour History for its help with both of these events.

Whether this proves to be the first of many newsletters depends entirely on whether there is sufficient material to put future ones together. Anybody with news of publications, research reports or any other information they wish to circulate - please send it in!

Kevin Morgan, Dept. of Govt., University of Manchester M13 9PL
0161-275-4907
Kevin.Morgan@man.ac.uk

★ ★ ★ ★

Edmund and Ruth Frow have just published a full listing of all pit and factory papers issued by the British Communist Party between 1927 and 1934, including those held in Moscow. This publication can be ordered from the Working Class Movement Library, Jubilee House, 51 Crescent, Salford, M5 4WX (price £4 to include postage; cheques payable to E Frow).

The Socialist History Society is organising a day-conference entitled "Getting the Balance Right" which aims to retrieve some of the more positive aspects of the CPGB's history. The conference will be held on Saturday 22 June at Birkbeck College, London. Further details from the society's secretary, Mike Squires, 50 Elmfield Road, Lonaon, SW17 8AL.

The latest issue of *Oral History* (volume 24, no. 1, Spring 1996) is devoted to "Political Lives" and includes three papers from the Red Tapes conference held in Manchester in October 1994. There are "Labour's Roots and Branches" by Dan Weinbren; "'Beyond the Smallness of Self'; Oral History and British Trotskyism" by Alan Johnson, and "Including the Feelings: Personal Political Theory and Self Disclosure" by Jo Stanley.

★ ★ ★ ★

CP Oral History Project

In recent years the historiography of British Communism has been transformed by the opening of the CPGB and Comintern archives. Amid the understandable excitement about these new documentary sources there is a danger that historians of the British CP may neglect the task of preserving another vital source, which is now rapidly disappearing, namely the recollections of Party veterans.

As Rob Perks of the National Sound Archive has pointed out, oral testimony is a vital ingredient in writing labour movement history: firstly, it fills gaps in the documentary record; secondly, it "provides the personal angle on great events which is often missing and enables surviving documents to be looked at with fresh insights"; thirdly, it can shed light on "the hidden agenda absent from the written minutes"; and finally, it "gives voice to the neglected aspects" of labour history, particularly the role of women and ethnic minorities. (Rob Perks, "Audio and oral history collections", in *Labour History Review*, Vol. 57 No. 1, Spring 1992, pp. 12-3)

Furthermore, oral evidence is indispensable for the task of mapping out a "history from below" of the CP, giving full weight to its grass roots within industry and working-class communities.

The Communist Party Oral History Project is a broad-based group that aims to bring together oral historians and CP veterans who are willing to be interviewed, and to build up a database of existing tapes of Party members. In the long term the Project aims to create, in conjunction with the National Sound Archive, a central collection of copies of tapes and transcripts.

The Project would like to hear from anyone who can help with this work. We are particularly anxious to find sources of funding. Anyone who can help should contact the secretary, Mike Squires, at 50 Elmfield Road, London, SW17 8AL (tel: 0181 673 8283).

Dave Turner

National Museum of Labour History: CP Archive News

Since the central CPGB archives were transferred from London to Manchester at the beginning of 1995 we have received several further deposits of papers relating to the party.

The largest deposit was material from the party's organisation department. These papers contain members' autobiographical details (often supplied on applications to party schools), disciplinary investigations into groups and individuals, and some records of the Appeals Committee. Almost all these records have been opened to the public. A small number will remain closed for the time being due to their personal (though not political) sensitivity.

Bill Moore has catalogued and done some re-ordering of the papers of the History Group. There is now an almost complete set of the group's published circulars, articles, pamphlets etc. The gaps in the minutes and correspondence are also being filled, most recently by further papers from former group secretary John Attfield which were obtained by Bill Moore.

With the assistance of Ralph Darlington we have also received a significant collection of papers and photographs relating to Molly and JT Murphy. These include a typed manuscript of Molly's unpublished autobiography, letters etc. from Molly during her time as a nurse for the Spanish Medical Aid Committee, copies of JT Murphy's correspondence with the CPGB re his resignation in 1932, and some draft articles and manuscripts.

Additionally former Executive Committee member Vicki Seddon donated some of her personal papers to the museum. These

include hand-written notes of EC meetings, Congress materials, some Yorkshire district papers and records relating to the party's work in higher and further education.

Most recently, thanks to a grant from the Barry Amiel and Norman Melburn Trust, we have been able to employ Jo Stanley on a part-time contract to sort and catalogue the previously unlisted records of the London District Communist Party. We hope that this extensive and important collection will be fully available by the end of the year.

Other recent deposits have included the unpublished autobiography of the activist Harold Hoare and an MA Thesis on British Communism and 1956 by Lawrence Black.

Finally with regard to the pre-1943 material held in Moscow, the museum hopes to be able to negotiate a formal microfilming project with the holders of the Comintern archive. As yet this project is only at an early stage.

By the end of the year the archive hopes to produce a new leaflet detailing the general contents of the CP archive and listing the publications available. Two articles describing the archives are also to appear this year, by Francis King in *Science and Society* and Kevin Morgan in *Twentieth Century British History*.

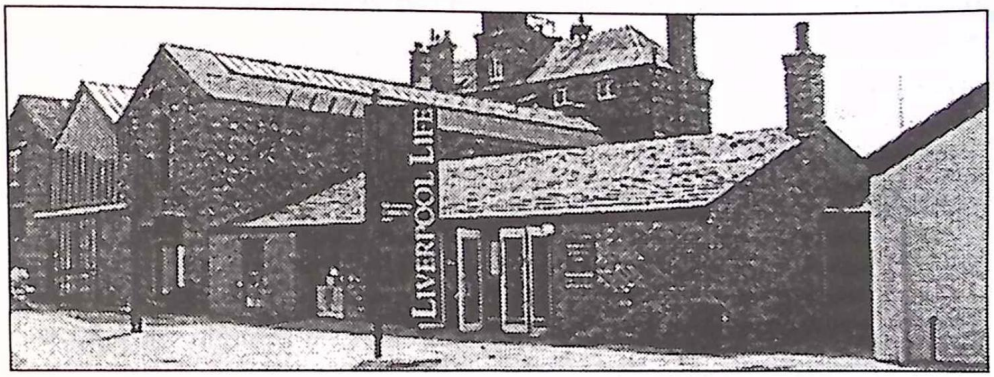
If anyone has queries or any papers they wish to deposit please contact the Archive Centre on (0161) 228 7212.

Andrew Flinn

The Museum of Liverpool Life incorporating Merseyside Museum of Labour History

With the abolition of Merseyside County Council in 1986 Merseyside County Museums, which included the newly created Merseyside Museum of Labour History, became National Museums & Galleries on Merseyside (NMGM), the only provincial museum group in England to be given national status on account of the quality of its collections. Following the change in status there was some discussion as to whether or not a national museum should concern itself with 'local' history. Given that Liverpool has made a considerable contribution to national life it was decided that it was entirely appropriate that NMGM should do so but on one site. Hence the new Museum of Liverpool Life project was set up in 1989 with the aim of bringing together, on a phased basis, the collections and displays dispersed among the Merseyside Museum of Labour History (MLH), the Large Objects Collection in Prince's Dock and the Liverpool Museum's King's Regiment and Transport galleries and re-presenting them in a coherent fashion. The chosen site was a group of buildings on Mann Island, between the Pierhead and Albert Dock, originally used by the Merseyside Maritime Museum but, since the opening of the Albert Dock, surplus to their requirements. Phase I opened in May 1993 with displays on 'Making a Living', 'Demanding a Voice' and 'Mersey Culture' eighteen months after the closure of the MLH.

There was. understandably, some resistance to the 'new' museum on the part of those who had supported the MLH since 1986 and who were opposed to the change of name, admission charge introduction and re-location to 'a tourist area'. The fact that the move meant increased display space and the opportunity for expansion in the future and that local residents would be eligible for a special admission pass, which would also give them access to the Maritime Museum, convinced some but not all of our critics. We considered that being adjacent to the Pierhead, a gathering place for political and trade union rallies over the years and an embarcation/disembarcation point for millions of people in search of a better life either overseas, or in Liverpool itself, would be a not inappropriate location. In terms of cityscape it has a high profile and being close to a tourist destination has its advantages in these days of increasing emphasis on visitor numbers.



Museum of Liverpool Life

The choice of title for the new site was difficult. We did not want to alienate our Museum of Labour History supporters. At the same time we wanted to encourage visitation from those sectors who, market research studies showed, were deterred from visiting by the name of the museum and their perception of what it would contain. In the end we compromised with Museum of Liverpool Life incorporating Merseyside Museum of Labour History.

The museum's name may have changed but the commitment to working class history and facing up to contentious issues has not. The 'Making a Living' and 'Demanding a Voice' sections of the Phase I displays are revised and extended versions of the 'Employment' and 'Building the Union' galleries at the Museum of Labour History. 'Mersey Culture' which attempts to look at aspects of culture within and outside the home was the least straightforward of the three. It poses the question as to whether Liverpool has a distinct culture of its own and leaves the visitor to decide.

The temporary exhibitions programme at MLH had provided the opportunity to build up contacts with various community groups and invite their participation in the exhibition process. Elements of these exhibitions were incorporated into the new displays and a number of community activists and subject specialists were commissioned to produce gallery videos on subjects such as Riots, the 1911 Transport strike, Merseyside Unity Theatre, and football supporters.

Phase 2 of the new museum aims to explore Liverpool people in their immediate environment (home and community) as well as the city as a place to live in. Phase 3 will look at the role that the King's Regiment has played in the city's history. It will be aimed at the general visitor although the regiment will be a strong interest group.

Funding constraints have delayed the opening of phases 2 and 3 which will now be part of a NMGM-wide bide to the Heritage Lottery Fund for support.

Loraine Knowles

The William Morris Society

The Society

The purpose of the William Morris Society is to promote the study of the life, work and influence of this great man. The Society welcomes new members whatever their interests.

William Morris (1834 – 1896)

William Morris was born in Walthamstow, Essex, on 24 March 1834. The son of a wealthy businessman, he enjoyed a comfortable childhood before going to Marlborough College and Exeter College, Oxford.

He originally intended to take holy orders, but his reading of the social criticism of Carlyle, Kingsley and Ruskin led him to reconsider the Church and devote his life to art.

After leaving Oxford, Morris was briefly articled to GE Street, the Gothic Revival architect, but he soon left, having determined to become a painter. His admiration for the Pre-Raphaelites led him to meet Dante Gabriel Rossetti whose influence can be seen on Morris's only surviving painting *La Belle Iseult*.

Arts and Crafts

In the 1860s Morris decided his creative future was in the field of the decorative arts. His career as a designer began when he decorated the Red House, Bexleyheath, which had been built for him by Philip Webb.

The success of this venture led to the formation of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. in 1861. The 'Firm' (later renamed Morris & Co) was particularly well-known for its stained glass, examples of which can be seen in churches throughout the country. Morris produced some 150 designs which are often characterised by their delightful foliage patterns.

His greatest achievement as a designer was in the field of textiles and wallpapers. The designs for these were influenced by his knowledge of the medieval works held at the South Kensington Museum and his own observation of natural forms.

Literature

Morris was well-known in his own time for his literature. His first volume of poetry – *The Defence of Guenevere* – received a mixed reception, but his reputation as a poet was established with the publication of *The Earthly Paradise* (1868-1870).

Among his many other works were icelandic and classical translations, *Sigurd the Volsung*, *The Pilgrims of Hope*, and a series of prose romances which included *A Dream of John Ball*, *News from Nowhere* and *The Well at the World's End*.

Politics

Morris entered national politics in 1876 as treasurer of the Eastern Question Association. This was a post he was to occupy in two further radical organisations: the National Liberal League and the Radical Union.

He soon became disillusioned with the Liberals and in 1883 joined the socialist Democratic Federation. After disagreements with the Federation's leader, Hyndman, he formed the Socialist League, and later the Hammersmith Socialist Society.

During the 1880s he was probably the most active propagandist for the socialist cause, giving hundreds of lectures and speeches throughout the country.

The Kelmscott Press

In 1890 Morris founded the Kelmscott Press in premises near his last home at Kelmscott House in Hammersmith (now the headquarters of the William Morris Society). Morris designed two typefaces for the Press: Golden and Troy. These were inspired respectively by fifteenth century Italian and German typography.

In all, sixty-six volumes were printed by the Kelmscott Press, the most impressive of which was its magnificent edition of Chaucer which was published in 1896.

Morris died at Kelmscott House on 3 October 1896.

Membership of the Society

Enables you . . .

- To participate in an extensive programme of events, lectures and visits including the annual William Morris birthday party and Kelmscott Lecture.
- To receive a quarterly newsletter packed with the latest details of activities relating to William Morris taking place in the UK and overseas.
- To receive a bi-annual Journal full of articles on Morris's life, work and influence.
- To make use of the Society's extensive library of books relating to William Morris and his circle.
- To receive news of the Society's other publications.
- To participate in the activities of local and regional groups associated with the Society.
- To make friends with fellow Morrisians both in the UK and overseas and help perpetuate the memory of one of the greatest men of the Victorian age.

Current Subscription rates are:

	Banker's Order	*Cash/Cheque*
Ordinary	£12.50	£13.50
Family	£17.50	£18.50
Life	—	£300.00
Corporate	£17.50	£18.50

A concessionary rate of £6.00 (Banker's Order) or £7.00 (cash/cheque) is available to anyone who would otherwise be deterred by financial circumstances from joining the Society.

The Membership Secretary
The William Morris Society
Kelmscott House
26 Upper Mall
Hammersmith
London W6 9TA
(Tel: 0181-741 3735)

1996 Centenary Programme

Below are only a few of the 60+ events celebrating William Morris's year of 1996. A full list is available from the Society.

14th March – *William Morris*: Ray Watkinson delivers the annual Marx Memorial Lecture; also exhibition at Library from August.

12th-14th April – *William Morris Communist Agitator*: weekend residential course at University of Cambridge, directed by Nick Salmon.

4th May – *William Morris's Politics*: forum arranged by Hammersmith Trades Council at the Irish Centre, inc. Bill Morris, Barbara Castle, Stan Newens.

7th September – *Morris Spoke Here!*: Hammersmith Trades Council march with street corner speeches and readings.

Scottish Trades Union Congress Centenary News

High Profile in '97

The scope and scale of the events being planned for the Centenary of the STUC in 1997 will ensure that Scottish trade unionism has a higher and more positive profile than at any time in the last 20 years.

Certainly, there will be many opportunities to celebrate 100 years of the STUC's history - a history which is inextricably intertwined with the popular, democratic, national and international causes of 20th century Scotland.

But, there will be equal emphasis on making the case for trade unionism and on mainstream European thinking on the positive role of trade unions in industrial relations and social and economic policy-making.

After 17 years of negative legislation and government hostility, the coincidence of a general election, a new government, and the STUC Centenary Year provide a unique opportunity to reverse the trend and promote the realistic and progressive contribution which trade unionism does offer.

Headline events

The Centenary Year is in the planning stages, but certain headline events in 1997 already stand out -

April Congress

The 100th STUC opens in Glasgow... An exhibition of trade union banners, old and new, is launched in Kelvingrove Art Gallery... Throughout Scotland, with exhibitions, displays and seminars, public libraries celebrate the Centenary through the theme of *Working Lives*... International trade union representatives meet in Glasgow.

June in the capital

Edinburgh welcomes the Centenary with a weekend based on the 50th Miners Gala, an official Scottish Office reception, and a gala concert.

Big day in Glasgow

On Sunday 31 August, music, street theatre and the biggest parade in years take over the centre of Glasgow.

Scotland Wide

Scotland's towns, cities and counties, building on existing events and taking new initiatives, will mark the Centenary nationwide.

Celebrate the past... and look to the future

Some events will command national and international media attention, others will be community-based and very local. There will be fun events embracing all kinds of popular culture, as well as more serious artistic works.

Social, political and historical issues will be dealt with in a way which makes them accessible to the majority of people in Scotland, but there will also be opportunities to explore particular themes and issues in greater depth.

Throughout the year and across all the events, projects and publications, two themes will stand out - a celebration of the history of the STUC, Scottish trade unionism and the lives of Scottish working people, and a promotion of the role to be played by trade unionism in the Scotland of tomorrow, open to democratic development and social and economic innovation.

Events for school students and young people will be a major feature of the Centenary.

Theatre and music

Commissions for theatrical and musical performances to celebrate the Centenary are currently under detailed discussion, particularly in Glasgow, but also elsewhere.

These include a production based on popular, labour and trade union songs, a Wildcat production, an international street dance festival and a touring work by 7:84 Theatre.

The themes of trade unionism and working lives will also be recognised in artistic fields as diverse as folk music and cinema.

Exhibitions

The National Library is working with the STUC on a Centenary exhibition to be available to tour the country from January 1997.

Women's exhibition - The STUC Women's Committee will be launching a touring exhibition in Glasgow on International Women's Day.

Banners exhibition will open to coincide with the 100th Congress in April.

Schools

The involvement of young people, and schools, are crucial to the forward looking themes of the Centenary Year. The first Centenary publication is a *modern studies booklet* for use in secondary schools. It deals with the founding of the STUC and with present day trade union issues. Produced with assistance from Strathclyde Regional Council, and sponsored by the Educational Institute of Scotland, it will be going to every secondary school in Scotland in the next few weeks to allow for its programmed use in the 1996/97 school year.

Schools will be encouraged to develop projects for the *Working Lives* month to take place in public libraries in April 1997.

A special nationwide *schools debating competition* will be organised with the final to take place at the STUC Congress in 1997.

Theatre About Glasgow have started work on a piece of theatre to tour schools and community venues throughout Scotland in Centenary year.

'Working Lives' in public libraries

In a joint initiative with the Scottish Library Association, the STUC will be promoting Scottish "working lives" in celebration of the Centenary in all 700 public libraries in Scotland throughout April 1997.

Exhibitions, displays and oral history are expected to feature strongly. There will also be the opportunity for trade union councils, trade union branches communities and schools to get involved in projects and workshops which deal with today's - and tomorrow's - trade union issues.

Local authorities in the Centenary

Local authorities throughout Scotland are enthusiastic about the Centenary and keen to incorporate its themes in their schools, libraries, museums, galleries and sports events in '97. Many are setting up working groups with trade union representation to make the maximum impact.

Seminars and conferences

Centenary Year will be marked by a series of seminars on the theme of *Shaping the Future* dealing with topics like health, education and international issues. Held in locations throughout Scotland, these will present opportunities for trade union representatives, local and national politicians, community representatives and acknowledged experts to develop policy as the approach of a Scottish Parliament adds to the urgency and possibilities for change.

A number of conferences are under discussion including a joint STUC/Association of University of Teachers (Scotland) conference on *Higher Education and a Scottish Parliament.*

Sports events

The new city local authorities have been discussing an inter-city youth games to be launched in Centenary Year.

(continues over)

Nationwide 5-a-side football and bowls tournaments are being planned.

An STUC day at the races will feature on the calendar of events.

Centenary history

Keith Aitken, well-known as a broadcaster and journalist, is writing a Centenary history to be published by Polygon in January.

A national and international year

The Centenary Year provides an opportunity to recognise and develop many friendships and alliances, national and international from which the STUC and our affiliates benefit and draw strength.

All STUC affiliated trade unions have been asked to look at bringing conferences and NEC meetings to Scotland in 1997 so that they can contribute to, and take part in, the Centenary celebrations.

International and solidarity organisations are in dialogue with the STUC on how best to recognise and develop the trade union movement's international dimension.

Scotland's churches will be marking their connections with the STUC and with workplaces and working communities in the course of the year.

The Scottish Labour History Society has agreed to make the Centenary the centrepiece of its conference and publications in 1997.

A year to remember

This report provides a flavour of the exciting range of events which will be happening in 1997, and a snapshot of where we are in the planning process.

If you want more information, or if you have ideas to develop or discuss, contact the STUC's Centenary Co-ordinator, Archie Fairley (tel: 0141-332 4946, fax: 0141-332 4649).

Media Section

Land and Freedom

Land and Freedom is simply one of the best political films ever made – intelligently scripted, well directed, superbly acted, stimulating, moving, entertaining – hard-hitting and even humorous in the right places.

The narrative follows the adventures of Dave Carr, a young unemployed Liverpudlian communist, who is an early volunteer to head off for Spain. Without too clear a picture of the political complexities at the front, he finds himself in a POUM militia group, revelling in the freedom of revolutionary direct action, land appropriation and romance at a time of sexual liberation and equality. But political realities hit him with a vengeance when he gets caught up in Barcelona in the suppression of the POUM militias by the Communist-led government, in the name of creating a disciplined 'people's army' and not alienating middle-class and Stalinist support.

The film obviously takes a particular political line on the Spanish events – as one would imagine from revolutionary socialist writer Jim Allen. Many will recognise the perspective from Orwell's writings based on his experiences in the POUM. Indeed any old communists or International Brigade veterans may have an uncomfortable experience watching the film, as it is no simple celebration of the left. On the surface, it is a depressing picture of sectarian in-fighting with failure and defeat for the left, but the skill of the film is to turn these events into one of the most inspirational films for the left for years.

Most likely this is achieved through the narrative framing device employed by Loach and Allen, with Dave's story unfolding to his grand-daughter in contemporary Liverpool as she looks through his letters and mementos after his death. The film ends at his funeral, with his grand-daughter mingling the Spanish earth he had brought home from the burial of his militia girl-friend, with his own grave's earth. As a metaphor for international class solidarity transcending boundaries of time, place, age, gender and nationality, it is one of the most powerful, moving and durable images ever created.

As always, what makes a Loach film is the performances he draws from his cast of professionals, semi-professionals and amateurs – so naturalistic that we are virtually there. Not the least of the triumphs is when he turns a potentially dry fifteen minute multi-lingual political discussion by a group of miltia and villagers about the strategy of land seizures into a rivetting drama of conflicting aspirations and ideologies.

A worthy prize-winner at Cannes in 1995, and an international favourite, the film only received minimal distribution in Britain, but with its availability now on video, it should reach a wider audience. Let's hope Loach's next, *Carla's Song*, about a Glasgow worker in the Nicaraguan struggle, is half as good.

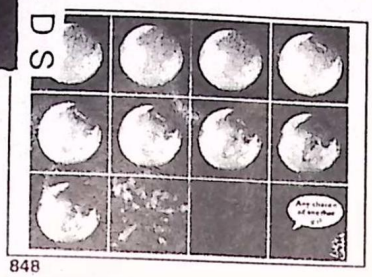
Douglas Allen

LEEDS POSTCARDS

New Cards 1996

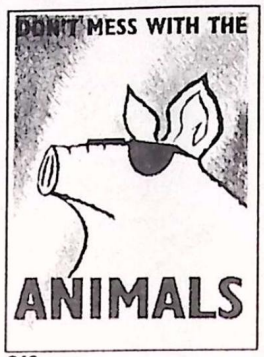
Cards published since the 1995 catalogue

Many of our cards are printed on recycled board.
Please see the order form for details of recycled cards and also for prices and terms.

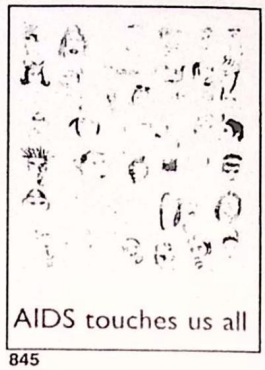


848
Any chance of another go?
Luke Warm

847
The Graduate
Luke Warm



846
Don't mess with the animals
Alec Walker
Vival



845
AIDS Awareness
Joanna Clinton
London Lighthouse

842
The Cruel Facts
Farm Animal Welfare Network
& Hillside Animal Sanctuary

843
No Offence
Leeds Animation Workshop

842
Chernobyl Zone
Sveta Tadaj
Manchester Nuclear Policy Unit

818
Global Reach
Paul Morton
CPBF (Press Freedom)

Now we're on the world wide web. Point your browser at http://www.poptel.org.uk/leedspostcards/ You can order our post-cards, browse - have fun AND send a virtual post-card by e-mail. Happy surfing.

D02
Great British Lies
Colin Shelbourne
Cardtoons

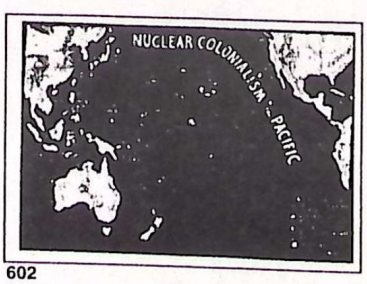
D01
Dog with hands
Edition Karte'll

Back in Print

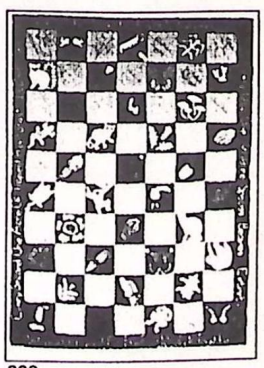
Cards recently reprinted

772
If you go down to the woods
Jim Medway
Liberty

701
No means No
Jacky Fleming



602
Nuclear Colonialism in the Pacific
Banner painted by Melanie Earle
Women working for nuclear free Pacific



328
Save the Rainforests
Sue Beckett
Women of Friends of the Earth

ORDERS ☎ 0113 246 8649 ◆ FAX 0113 243 6730 ◆ BY POST PO BOX 84 LEEDS LS1 4HU ◆ Email leedspostcards@geo2.poptel.org.uk